

# 2007

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY  
Communitywide  
Results Report



# MISSION STATEMENT OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

The County's elected representatives and employees are committed to serve the community with pride to enhance the economic, environmental and social quality of life in San Luis Obispo County.

# COMMUNITYWIDE RESULTS

## A SAFE COMMUNITY

The County will strive to create a community where all people, adults and children alike, have a sense of security and wellbeing, crime is controlled, fire and rescue response is timely, and roads are safe.

## A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

The County will strive to ensure all people in our community enjoy healthy, successful and productive lives and have access to the basic necessities.

## A LIVABLE COMMUNITY

The County will strive to keep our community a good place to live by carefully managing growth, protecting our natural resources, promoting lifelong learning, and creating an environment that encourages respect for all people.

## A PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY

The County will strive to keep our economy strong and viable and assure that all share in this economic prosperity.

## A WELL-GOVERNED COMMUNITY

The County will provide high-quality, results-oriented services that are responsive to community desires.

FOR SPECIFIC  
SECTION, PLEASE  
CLICK ON ANY  
TITLE WITHIN TABLE  
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# INTRODUCTION

The Board of Supervisors for the County of San Luis Obispo is proud to present the third edition of our Communitywide Results Report. The report describes the Board's vision for the County – a place that is safe, healthy, livable, prosperous and well-governed – and identifies the key indicators the County monitors to track our progress relative to realizing this vision. Now that the ACTION for Healthy Communities Indicators Report has been expanded to encompass most of the data presented here, we expect this to be the final edition of this report. However, the County will continue to actively support and participate in the development of the ACTION for Healthy Communities Indicators Report. ACTION plans to publish its next indicators report in late 2009 or early 2010 and will include updated data for most, if not all, of the indicators presented here.

The Communitywide Results Report complements our internal efforts to become a high performance organization that emphasizes quality, customer value, efficiency and results that are important to the community. The vision provides a focus, guiding our organization in setting priorities and enhancing our accountability to one another, as well as the public we serve.

# USING THE COMMUNITYWIDE RESULTS REPORT

The report is divided into five sections; one for each of the five Communitywide Results. Each section contains a set of key indicators selected to provide the reader with a sense of how we are doing relative to the desired Communitywide Result. As you review the report, please keep in mind the following:

- For the most part, we have avoided setting goals or offering opinions and recommendations in the report. Rather, our approach has focused on presenting facts and allowing readers to draw their own conclusions.
- Data for several of the indicators came from a statistically valid telephone survey conducted by Applied Survey Research on behalf of the ACTION for Healthy Communities collaborative. The most recent survey took place in the fall of 2006 and involved surveying 504 randomly selected adults in the county. Given the sample size and random nature of the survey, the results can be interpreted as representative of adults in the county.\* The next survey is scheduled to take place in the spring of 2009.
- In addition, the County partnered with the National Research Center to conduct the second Citizen's Opinion Survey in February and March 2007 as part of the National Citizen's Survey project. This survey was conducted to capture the opinions of county residents regarding the quality of many services the County provides, key issues facing the community, etc. Three thousand households in the county were randomly selected, and of that sample, 996\*\* residents responded to the survey. Results from this survey are reported to supplement the information collected by the ACTION for Healthy Communities.

\* With a randomly selected countywide sample of 504, the resulting population proportions are accurate + or - 4.5% (i.e. 95% confidence level).

\*\*The 95% confidence level for this survey of 996 residents is generally no greater than + or - 3 percentage points around any given percent reported for the entire sample.

## KEY FINDINGS

Below are some key findings that emerged from the report. Overall, most of the indicators are moving in a positive direction, which is encouraging. There are, however, some areas of critical concern, as well as others that we should keep an eye on.

We have categorized these findings by: “What’s Good,” “What Needs Work,” and “What’s Worth Watching.”

## WHAT’S GOOD. . .

- San Luis Obispo County continues to be very safe place to live. Not only do we have one of lowest crime index ratings in the state, but recent surveys conducted by the ACTION for Healthy Communities Collaborative and the National Citizen’s Survey project revealed that the vast majority of our residents feel “very safe” in their neighborhoods, particularly during the day. See Pages 8-9 of this report for more information.
- The teen birth rate has declined, along with the statewide average. Our teen birth rate has fallen considerably over the past decade and has consistently remained well below the statewide average. See Page 16 of this report for more information.
- Residents are happy with our parks and recreation opportunities. In a recent survey conducted by ACTION for Healthy Communities Collaborative, 93% of respondents favorably rated the parks and recreation opportunities in the county. See Page 28 of this report for more information.
- Fewer residents report experiencing discrimination. The results from the recent survey conducted by ACTION for Healthy Communities Collaborative reflects a downward trend in discrimination experienced by our citizens. See Page 30 for more information.
- The wholesale value for crop sales in 2005 set a record high, up 11% from the prior year. This is largely due to the value of wine grapes, the single largest cash crop produced in the county. See Page 31 of this report for more information.
- Tourism spending and per capita retail sales continue to increase. Since 2000 there has been a 12% increase in tourism spending in our county (or approximately \$109 million). In addition, per capita retail sales have increased 18% since 2000 (up \$1,742 per person) while the statewide per capital sales have declined slightly over the same time period. See Pages 32-33 of this report for more information.
- County residents continue to have good things to say about County government. In a recent survey, conducted by the ACTION for Healthy Communities collaborative, 71% favorably rated County government and the services we provide. See Page 38 of this report for more information.

## WHAT NEEDS WORK. . .

- We have one of the least affordable housing markets in the nation, and this situation continues to worsen. Data prepared by the National Association of Home Builders ranks the San Luis Obispo region as the 14th least affordable area in the nation. In the fourth quarter of 2006, only 7.1% of the homes sold in our local “Metropolitan Statistical Area” could be purchased by a family with the median income (\$63,800/year) for this same area. See Page 35 of this report for more information.
- Alcohol abuse among county teens in the ninth and 11th grades remains higher than the statewide average, although this rate has been declining over the past few years. Local teens tend to view alcohol use as less harmful than their state peers, based on data from the 2005 “Healthy Kids” survey. In addition, a significant change noted in the data from this survey is that more females in the 11th grade report drinking (44%) as compared to their male peers (38%). See Pages 17-19 of this report for more information.

## WHAT’S WORTH WATCHING. . .

- Fewer children are being immunized against preventable diseases. Since 2003, the percentages of children enrolling in child care centers and in kindergarten who receive immunizations has declined and is now below the statewide average. Neither the state or the county have met the Healthy People 2010 National Objective of 95%. See Page 20 of this report for more information.
- The automobile collision rate is climbing, exceeding the statewide average in all but the rate of collisions occurring in signalized intersections. The primary factors causing collisions are inattentive driving (34%) and traveling at unsafe speeds (24%). Drivers running their cars off the road made up the most common type of collision. See Pages 12-13 for more information.
- Substantiated child abuse cases remain significantly higher than statewide averages, despite the fact that the method for counting such cases has been refined to reduce the number of duplicate cases reported. While this may be a reflection of an educated community sensitive to child abuse issues, there is no data to support this. Therefore, it will be important to keep a close watch on this issue. See Page 11 of this report for more information.
- Traffic congestion is a growing concern to residents. In a recent survey conducted by the ACTION for Healthy Communities Collaborative, 83% of respondents were “very concerned” (41.2%) or “somewhat concerned” (41.3%) with traffic congestion in their communities. The number of respondents indicating that they are very concerned about traffic congestion increased 27%, compared to the same survey conducted in 2003. See Page 26 of this report for more information.

# A SAFE COMMUNITY

The County will strive to create a community where all people – adults and children alike – have a sense of security and well-being, crime is controlled, fire and rescue response is timely, and roads are safe.

## CRIME INDEX

The California Crime Index (CCI) tracks the major violent crimes (i.e., homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault) and property crimes (i.e., burglary and motor vehicle theft) for counties with populations exceeding 100,000. It is the number of crimes divided by every 100,000 in population.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Crime is a reflection of the basic social and economic health of a community. Crime, and perception of crime, is directly linked to residents' feelings of safety and security and is an important element in determining the quality of life in a community.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

As shown on the accompanying chart, the CCI for all of San Luis Obispo County in 2005 was 1,521.37 crimes per 100,000 population, showing a 13.25% decrease since 1996. Countywide data for the full year of 2006 has not yet been reported. Over the last 10 years, the county's crime rate decreased from a high of 1,753.79 crimes per 100,000 population to a low of 1,416.21 in 1999 and then continued to rise over the next five years. The crime rate for 2005 shows a 5% decrease, as compared to 2004, reversing this trend. Statistics for the state of California as a whole follow a similar pattern, although data for 2005 is not available. The CCI for our county remains one of the lowest in the state and a bit more than half the statewide average in 2004 of 2,520.6 per 100,000 population. However, it has been growing at a slightly faster rate than the statewide average, which rose almost 9.6% since 1999. The CCI for crimes in unincorporated areas of the county increased by 6% in 2005, as compared to 2004.



\* Source: California Department of Justice



# PERCEPTION OF SAFETY

This indicator reports on perceptions of safety in the community, and is tracked via a statistically valid telephone survey conducted by the ACTION for Healthy Communities Collaborative, as well as a Citizen’s Opinion Survey recently conducted (via mail) of county residents.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

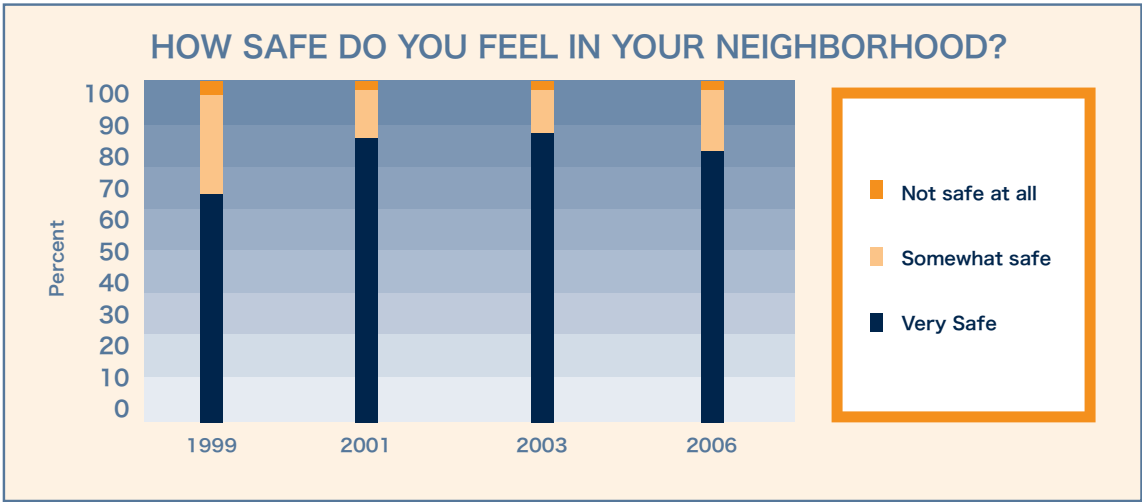
This indicator is important to track because it helps us determine whether the community’s perception of safety is in sync with the County’s “hard” crime data (e.g., California Crime Index). Should we find that “perception” and “reality” are not in sync, we can then take steps to improve the situation.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

The 2006 ACTION telephone survey contained the following question, which was posed to 504 randomly selected adults in the county: “How safe would you say you feel in your neighborhood?”

The survey results show the vast majority of county residents (80%) feel “very safe,” another 19% feel “somewhat safe” and only 1% feel “not safe at all.” These results correspond well with the County’s relatively low crime index (see Page 8 for more information). However, fewer respondents indicate they feel “very safe” as compared to the 2003 survey results, despite the fact that the crime rate declined slightly in 2005. Residents in the North Coast area had the greatest percentage of respondents indicating that they felt “very safe,” while residents in the South County had the least percentage that said they felt “very safe.”

While the actual questions and results from the data gathered in the Citizen’s Opinion Survey and the ACTION for Healthy Communities Collaborative Survey were somewhat different, they each corroborate the results that most residents find our County to be a very safe place to live. In the Citizen’s Opinion Survey, when asked to rate how safe they feel in their neighborhood during the day, 70% said they feel “very safe” and 24% said they feel “somewhat safe” – and in their neighborhood after dark, 39% said they feel “very safe” and 39% said they feel “somewhat safe”. These results, as compared to the 2003 Citizen’s Opinion Survey, also reflect a decline in the perception of safety. In 2003, 77% said they feel “very safe” and 20% said they feel “somewhat safe” in their neighborhood during the day, and 45% said they feel “very safe” and 43% said they feel “somewhat safe” in their neighborhood after dark.



\* Source: 2006 ACTION for Healthy Communities

# EMERGENCY RESPONSE TIME

This indicator tracks, on average, how quickly the County Fire Department arrives at the scene of an emergency fire or medical call (i.e., from 911 call to scene arrival). Generally speaking, the County Fire Department provides service to the unincorporated areas of the county.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

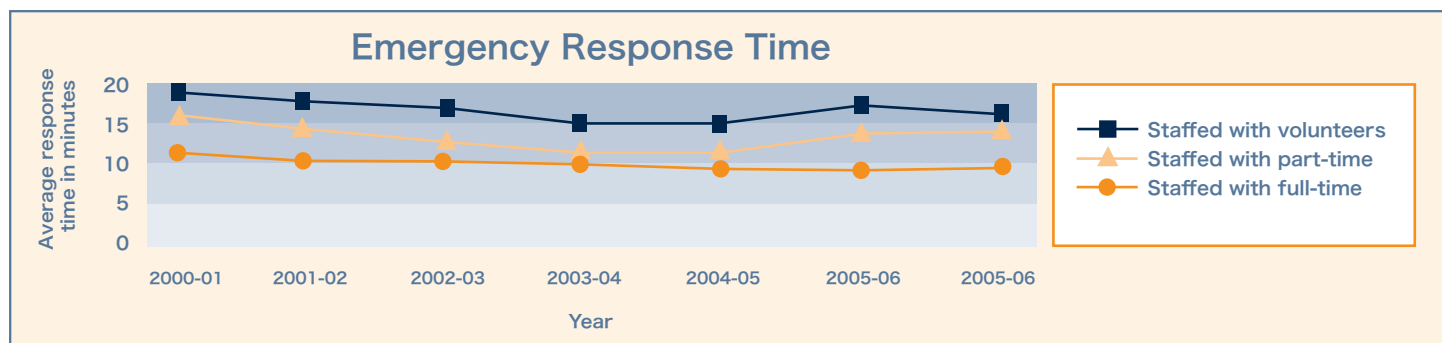
The sooner firefighters arrive at the scene of an emergency, the greater the opportunity to save lives and property.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

County Fire tracks emergency response times by station staffing type:

- 1) Stations staffed solely by volunteers.
- 2) Stations staffed with part-time, paid fire personnel.
- 3) Stations staffed with full-time, paid fire personnel.

Response times in fiscal year 2005-06 (i.e. 7/1/2005 - 6/30/2006) vary from an average of 18 minutes for stations staffed solely with volunteers to 10 minutes for stations staffed with full-time fire personnel. The nationally recognized standard is five minutes, which can be difficult to meet in some rural areas. Stations relying on an all-volunteer work force experienced longer average response times in fiscal year 2005-06 compared to prior years, due to a combination of increased call volume, long travel distances and availability of volunteers to respond to calls received. The department projected that the average response time for these stations will drop to 16 minutes in fiscal year 2006-07.



\* Source: Cal Fire

# CHILD AND ADULT ABUSE

This indicator tracks the number of substantiated child abuse and adult abuse (i.e., disabled adults and fragile seniors) cases in San Luis Obispo County.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

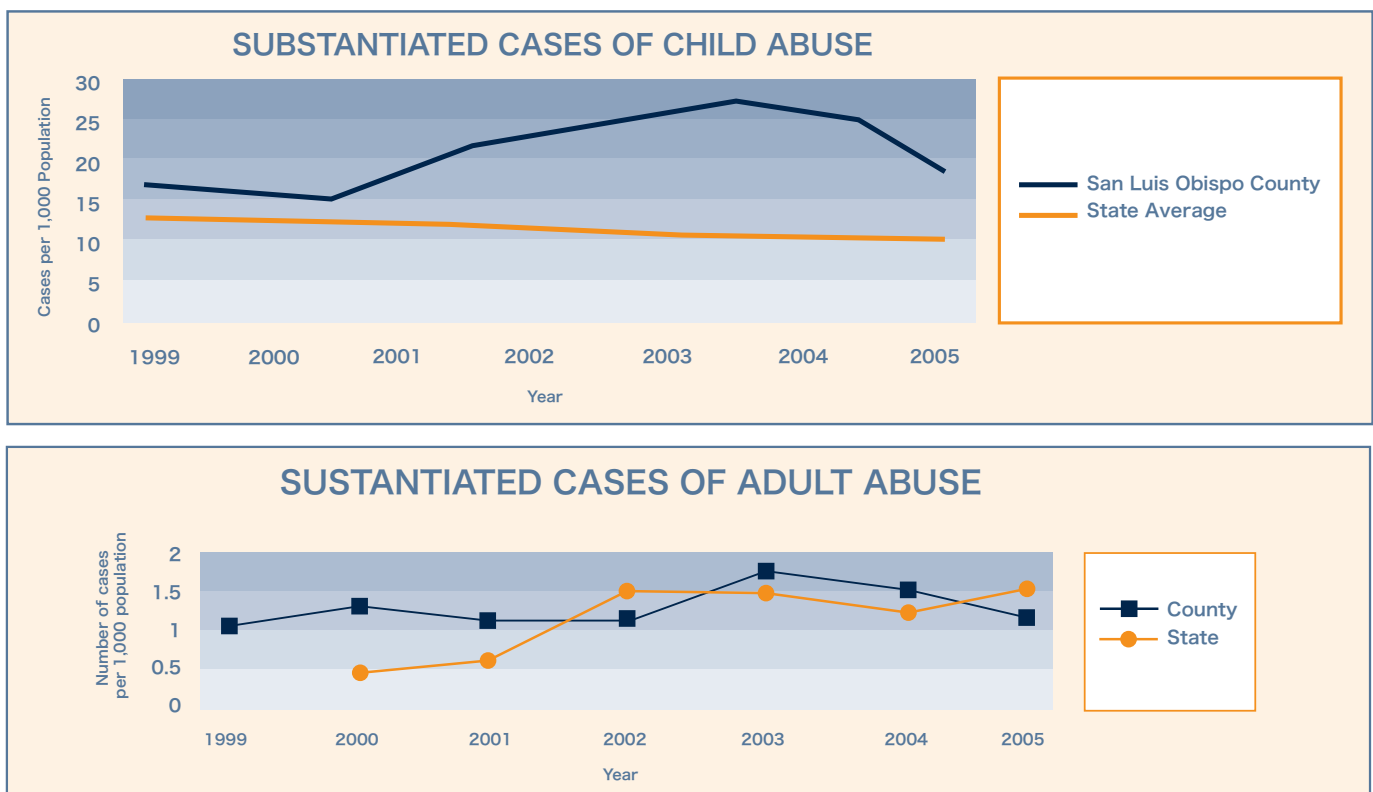
Protecting children, disabled adults and fragile seniors from harm is a high priority of any healthy community. Tracking prevalence rates over time helps to assess the long-term impact of Social Services' efforts to reduce the incidence of child and adult abuse in the community. While it is impossible to control all the factors that contribute to the prevalence of abuse, it is important to monitor trends.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

As shown on the table below, San Luis Obispo County's child abuse prevalence rates for 2005 have declined 34% since 2002, primarily due to a change in data-collection methods to ensure duplicate reporting of cases is eliminated.

Despite this decline, the rate of substantiated cases of child abuse in this county (17.6 per 1,000 population) remains significantly higher than the statewide average of 11.3 – a rate that has remained fairly static since 1999. While these disparities may appear alarming at first glance, the rate for San Luis Obispo County may reflect our community's low tolerance for abuse and strong inclination to report suspected abuse.

The rate for adult abuse cases in San Luis Obispo County in 2005 has declined. This rate peaked in 2003 and has now fallen below the statewide average for the first time since 2002.



\* Source: Department of Social Services

## ROADWAY SAFETY

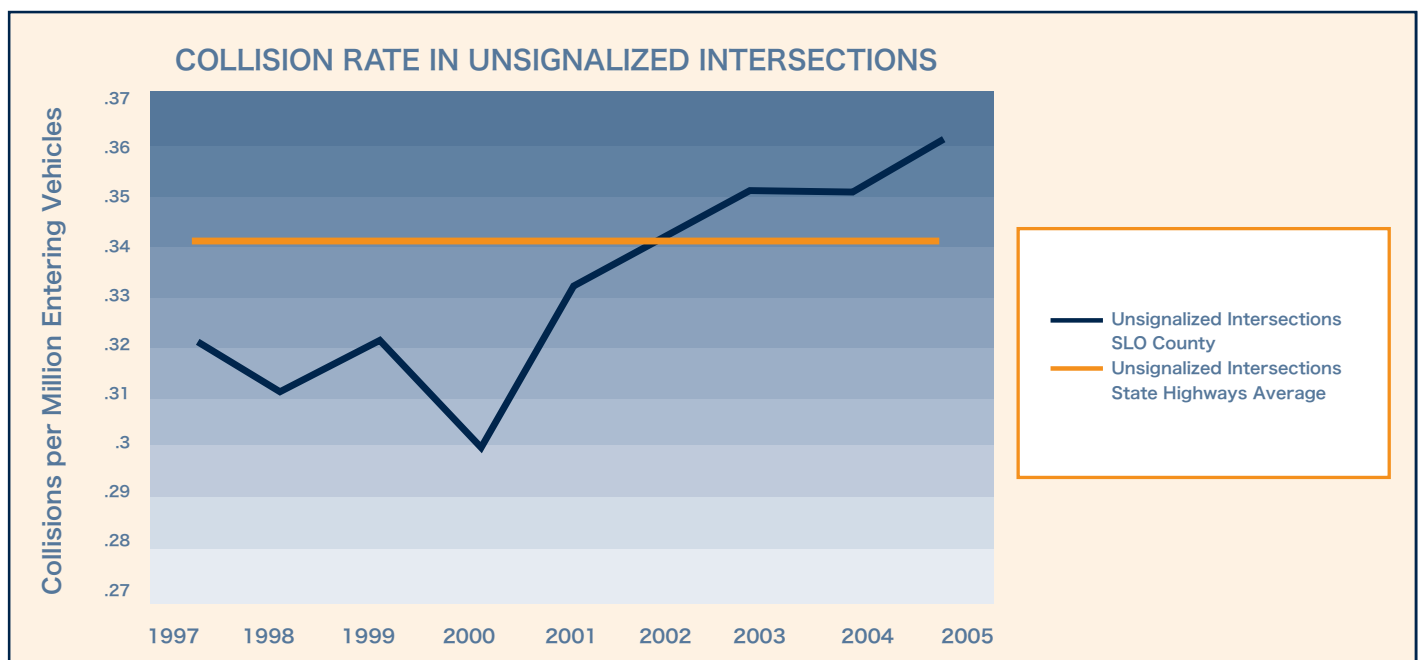
This indicator tracks the average collision rate for roads and intersections located in the unincorporated areas of the county.

### WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Between 1997 and 1999, there were nearly 2,100 collisions on county roads. By tracking these collisions by location, type, degree of injury, and road conditions, the County can make educated decisions on how to improve road safety and reduce exposure to liability.

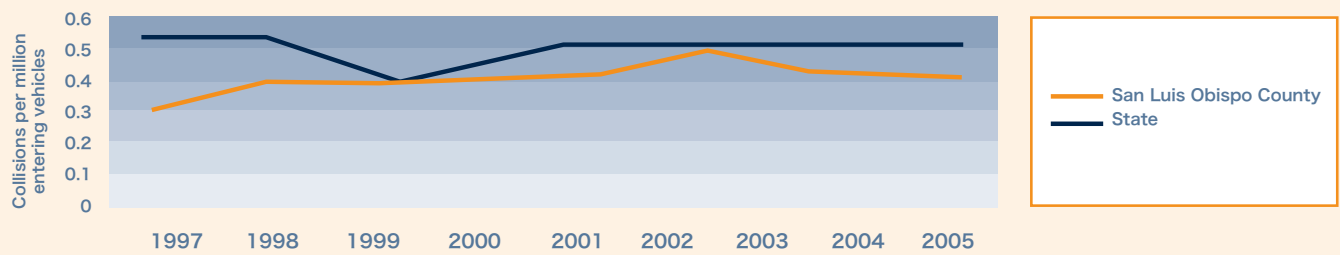
### HOW ARE WE DOING?

Each year, County Public Works analyzes the road and intersection collision data and develops plans for mitigating these rates in the highest accident areas. The total number of collisions has increased steadily since 2000, climbing from 750 in 2001 to 948 in 2005. The collision rate on suburban roads has declined to 2.37 in 2005 since this rate peaked in 2001, but has remained above the statewide average over the past 10 years. The collision rate on rural roads has been trending upward over the past four years reaching 169 in 2005, which has also remained above the statewide average of 1.3. In light of the data presented in the accompanying graphs, Public Works will focus its efforts in coming years on improving collision rates on rural roads.

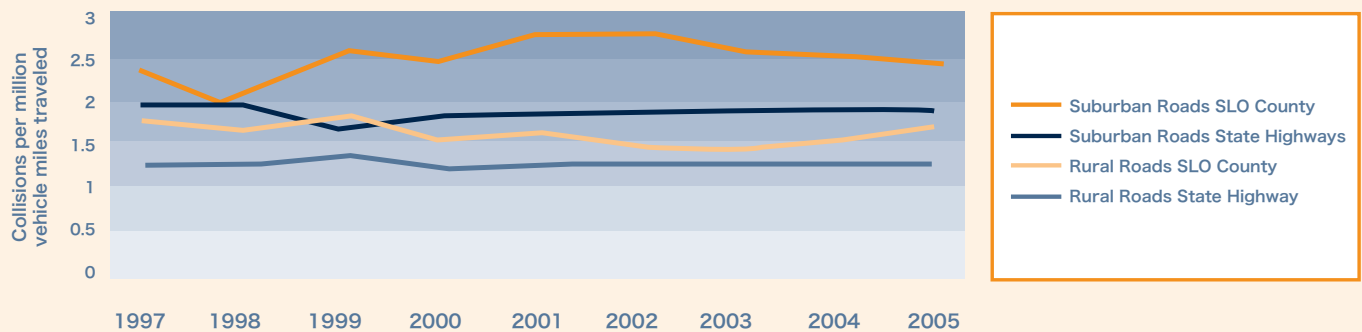


\* Source: County Public Works

### COLLISION RATE IN SIGNALIZED INTERSECTIONS



### COLLISION RATE ON RURAL AND SUBURBAN ROADS



# A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

The County will strive to ensure all people in our community enjoy healthy, successful and productive lives and have access to the basic necessities.

## HEALTH CARE ACCESSIBILITY

This indicator tracks the percentage of residents who have forgone health care in the past year due to financial reasons. This indicator is tracked via a statistically valid telephone survey conducted by the ACTION for Healthy Communities Collaborative.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

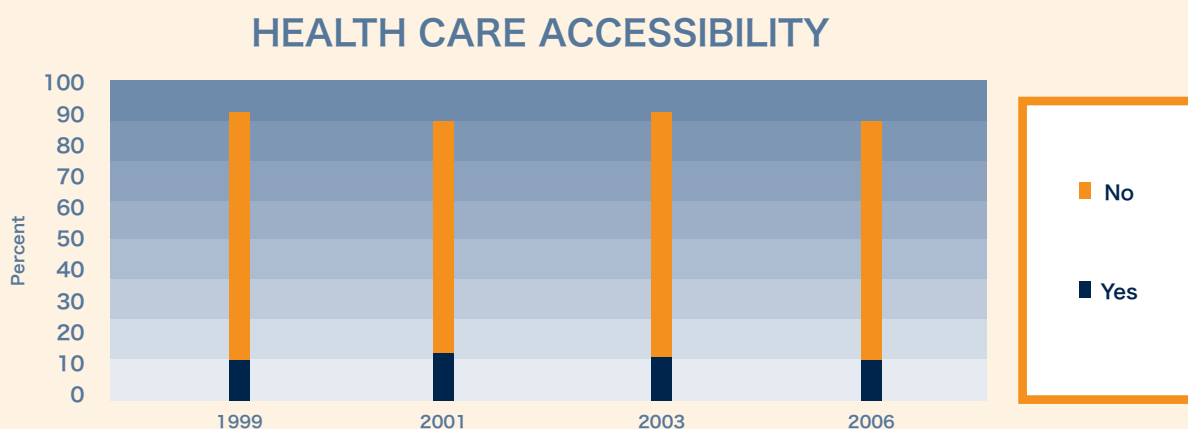
Ensuring that residents have access to health care, regardless of financial status, is a basic component of any healthy community. This indicator, along with other health care accessibility questions contained in the ACTION telephone survey, provides us with a sense of how well our health care system is working and helps us identify priority areas for improvement.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

The 2006 ACTION telephone survey contained the following question which was posed to 504 randomly selected adults in our community:

"Have you or a member of your household needed health care in the past year and been unable to receive it because you could not afford it?"

The survey results showed that 9.9% of the population had gone without health care in the past year due to financial reasons. This figure reflects a slight decrease from the 2003 survey results of 11.1%.



\* Source: 2006 ACTION for Healthy Communities Survey

# LOW-BIRTH-WEIGHT BABIES

Low birth weight measures the percentage of infants born who weigh below 5.5 pounds.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

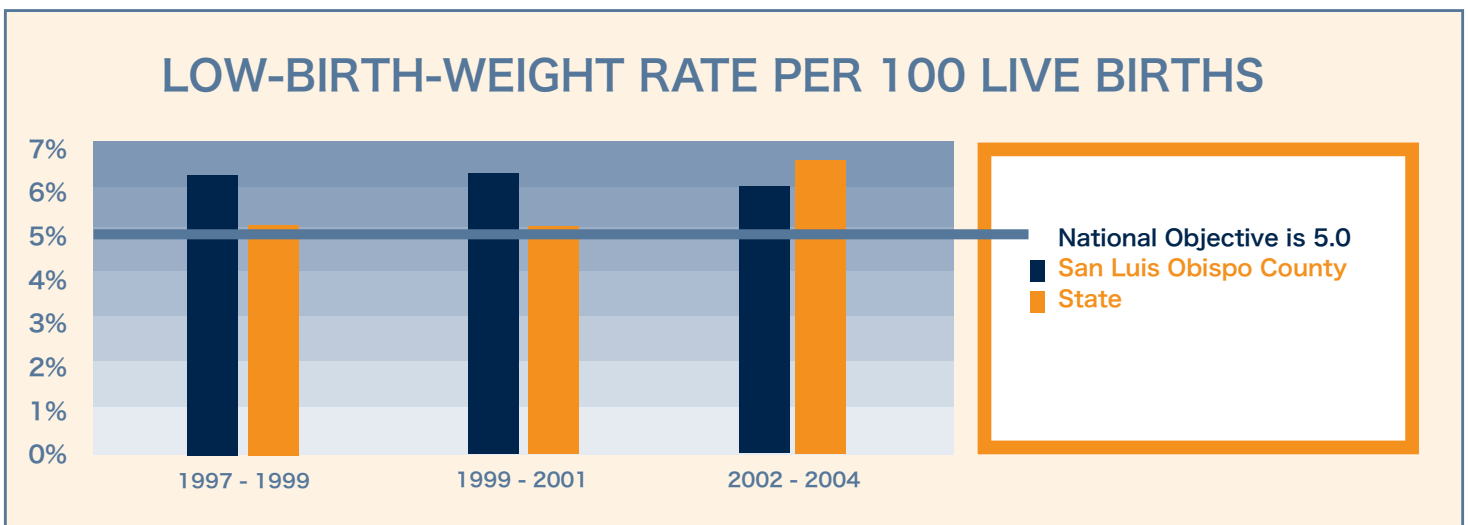
Low birth weight represents one of the strongest predictors of infant mortality and has been linked to serious lifelong physical and behavioral health problems. Costs to care for a low-birth-weight baby are more than double those of a normal-weight newborn.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

The percentage of low-birth-weight infants for San Luis Obispo County (three-year average) was 5.9 per 100 live births in 2002 - 2004, reflecting a slight reduction from the average from 1999 - 2001. This rate compares favorably to the average rate for the state of 6.6 per 100 live births in 2002 - 2004 (the most recent reporting period). During this period, San Luis Obispo County ranked 22nd out of 58 counties in the state.

Neither the state nor our county has achieved the Healthy People 2010 National Objective of keeping the incidence to no more than 5.0 percent low-birth-weight infants.

Only seven of the 58 California counties have achieved this objective (as of the 2006 reporting period) including: Alpine, Colusa, Tuolumne, Del Norte, Glenn, San Benito and Mariposa.



\* Source: County Health Status Profile (CA Department of Health Services)

# TEEN BIRTH RATE

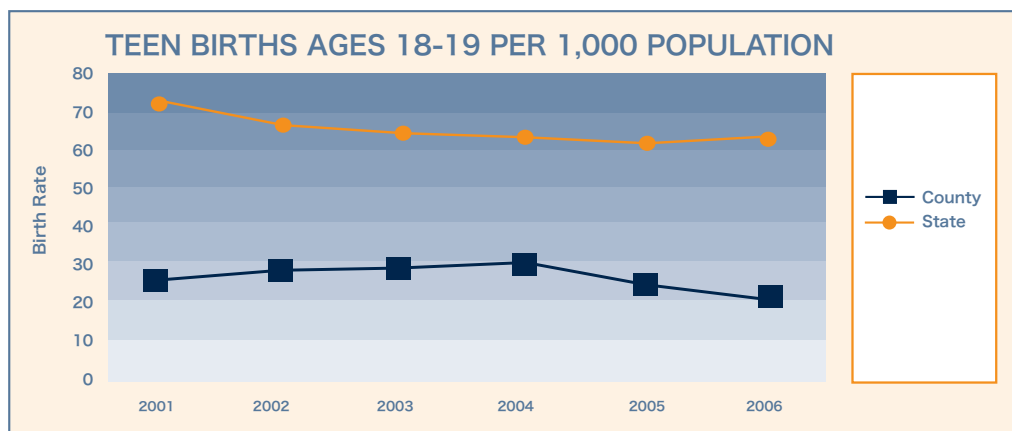
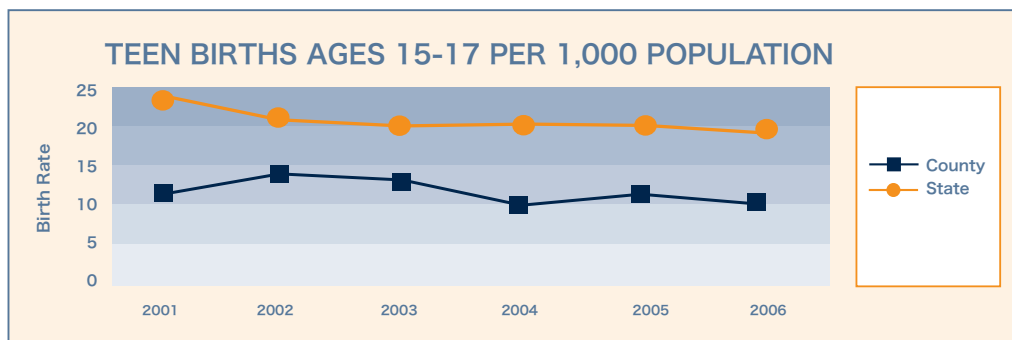
The rate measures the number of births to teen women between the ages of 15 to 19 for every thousand women of the same age in the population.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Pregnancy and child bearing during adolescence can jeopardize the health of both the mother and unborn child. Teen mothers are at greater risk for having pregnancy complications, premature births and low-birth-weight infants. Young mothers can also face decreased employment opportunities, lower educational attainment and increased likelihood of poverty and welfare dependence. Further, teen births represent a significant financial burden to the public. The state estimates that close to 75% of all teen births are paid for by Medi-Cal, and that the total public program costs (i.e., CalWorks, Medi-Cal) for the first year of one teen pregnancy conservatively hovers around \$10,000.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

Since 1992, the county's teen birth rate for both 15 to 17- and 18 to 19-year-olds has generally trended downward (with a few exceptions) as has the statewide average. The teen birth rate in San Luis Obispo County has consistently been significantly less than that of the state for each of these age groups. For both age groups combined, San Luis Obispo County ranked 11th in the state for births in 2002 - 2004, with a rate of 21.7 births for every 1,000 women ages 15-19, as compared to the statewide average of 39.2 births for 1,000 women in this age group for the same period.



**Sources:**

The number of teen births is taken from the birth registry at the County Public Health Department.  
The number of teens in the county is available from the Census data information at [www.dof.ca.gov](http://www.dof.ca.gov).  
State data is taken from the CA Dept. of Health Services, County Health Profiles 2006.



# YOUTH ALCOHOL USE RATES

The indicators presented here are the most significant measure of youth substance use in our County, as compared to state and national figures. They are:

1. Current alcohol use (past 30-day) - Measures the percentage of youth who report drinking alcohol at least once in the past 30 days.
2. Perceived harm of frequent alcohol use - Demonstrates the perception teens have of the potential harm caused by frequent alcohol use. Frequent use is defined as daily or almost daily use in the past 30 days.
3. Perceived disapproval of alcohol use – Measures the percentage of teens who feel their parents or peers would disapprove of their alcohol use.
4. Binge drinking - Indicates the percentage of teens who report they have consumed at least five drinks in a two-hour period for boys or four drinks in a two-hour period for girls.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Alcohol is the number one drug of choice among youth and local teens, more than twice as much as marijuana, and far more than any other drugs. Alcohol is accessible, inexpensive and legally purchased and consumed by adults, making it more appealing and available to youth. Alcohol is, at times, a gateway drug, sometimes leading to experimentation and possible abuse of drugs such as marijuana, ecstasy and methamphetamine. Because of this, the County's prevention efforts focus on alcohol as the primary target for reduction, while addressing all drugs and their potential harm in education and outreach programming.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

On the whole, indicators of youth alcohol use in San Luis Obispo have remained stable or improved slightly. County seventh-graders have remained on par with statewide rates except Perceived Disapproval, where they report at rates 4% higher than their statewide peers that their parents and friends would disapprove of their using alcohol. Perceived disapproval by peers and parents is a key protective factor, and youth who feel there are consequences for substance use, including peer disapproval, are less likely to engage in risky drinking behaviors.

Since 1999, local teens' perception of harm from alcohol use has remained consistently lower than statewide levels. It appears that our youth see alcohol as less harmful than do their statewide peers. Focus groups have been employed since 2003 to investigate possible reasons for this phenomenon, including media exposure, increased adult alcohol consumption (i.e., modeling), the expansion of the local wine industry, and the influence of local college drinking activity.

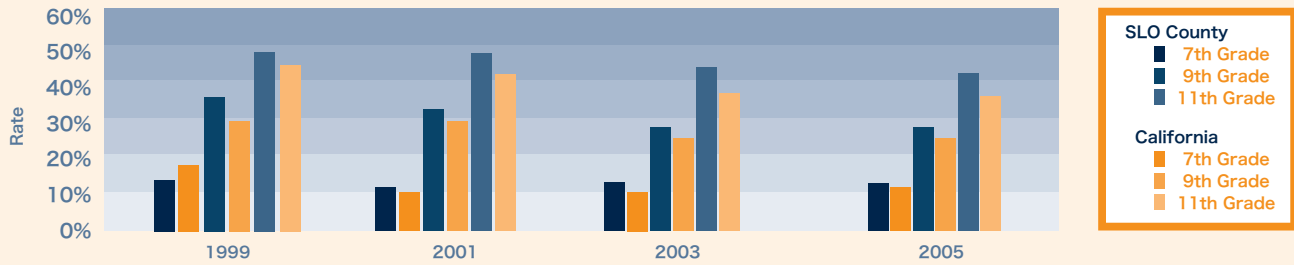
Alcohol usage and binge drinking among ninth- and 11th-graders decreased substantively between 1999 and 2005, dropping between 5% and 8% across indicators. Unfortunately, however, indicators of alcohol use for ninth- and 11th-graders continue to lag behind their peers statewide, with ninth- and 11th-graders reporting alcohol use rates 3% and 6% higher, respectively, than statewide results. Of particular concern, drinking among teen girls has increased significantly since 1999, with 11th-grade girls now reporting higher rates of alcohol use than their male peers – 44% vs. 38%.

Binge drinking rates among county teens remain a particular problem. Episodic heavy drinking, or “binging,” is a potentially harmful activity that can lead to serious physiological damage, violence, drunk driving, sexual assault, unprotected sex, blackouts, alcohol poisoning, accidents and even death. Locally, 11th-graders have reported binge drinking at rates that, while declining overall by 5% since 1999, have consistently lagged behind statewide rates by 7%, dropping from 33% in 1999 to 28% in 2005, versus a statewide drop from 26% in 1999 to 21% in 2005.

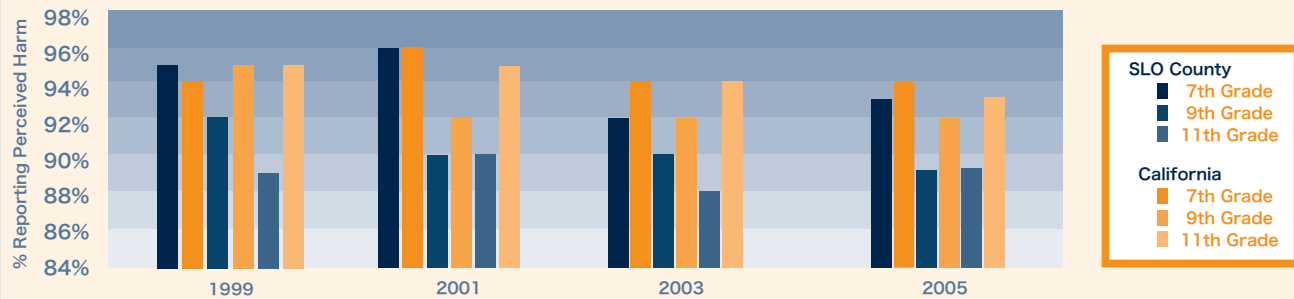
It is worth noting that the binge drinking rate among Cal Poly males is well above the national figure as well: 60.4% in a 2003 Cal Poly survey versus 48.6% nationwide in a 2001 Harvard survey. This has been a cause of concern for the Cal Poly community over the past several years, and the campus Substance Use and Abuse Advisory Committee and Alcohol Task Force have instituted targeted efforts over the past two years to change binge-drinking behavior, including social marketing programs and increased penalties for alcohol policy infractions.

“ALCOHOL IS THE NUMBER ONE SUBSTANCE ABUSE ISSUE WITH YOUTH. IT IS AT TIMES A GATEWAY DRUG AND CAN LEAD TO EXPERIMENTATION...”

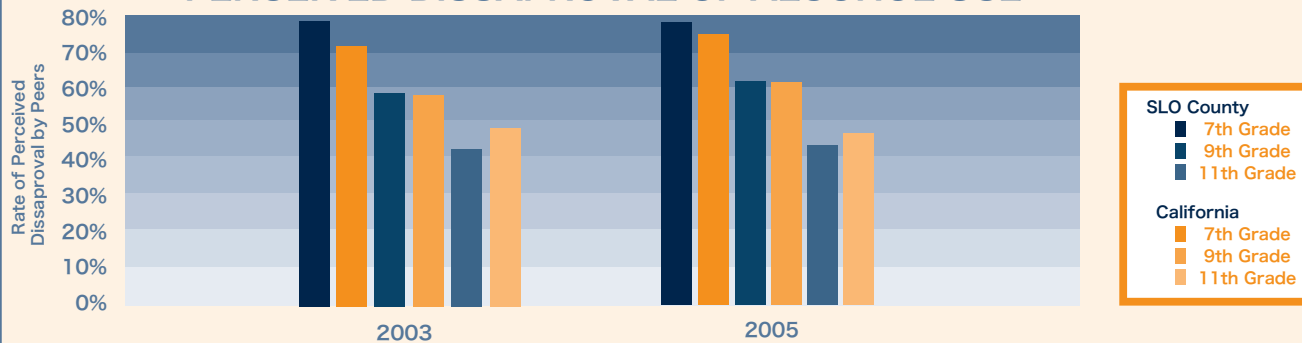
## CURRENT (30 DAY) ALCOHOL USE RATE



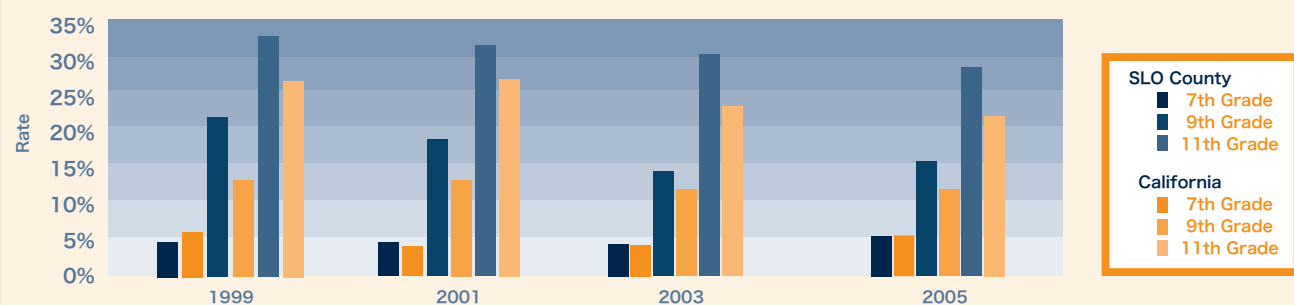
## RATE OF PERCEIVED HARM OF FREQUENT ALCOHOL USE



## PERCEIVED DISSAPPROVAL OF ALCOHOL USE



## BINGE DRINKING RATE



# IMMUNIZATION LEVELS

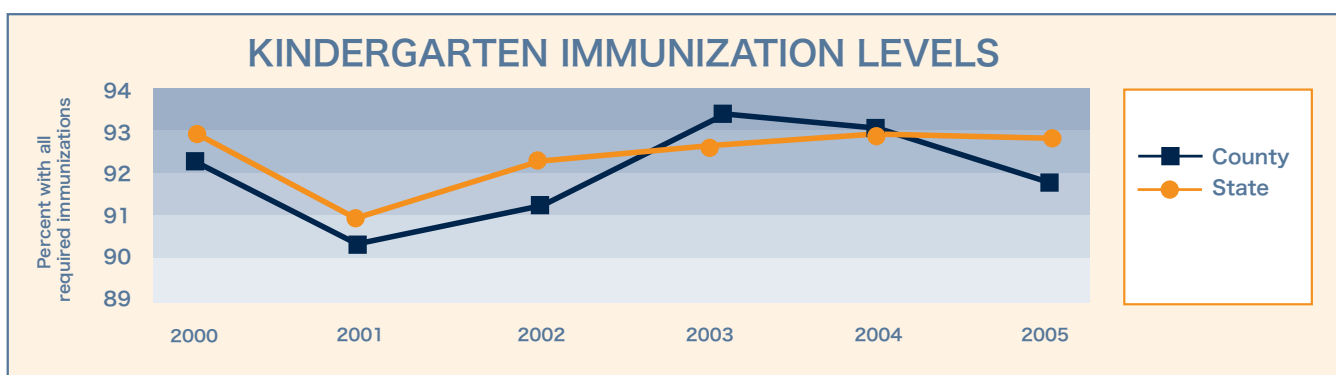
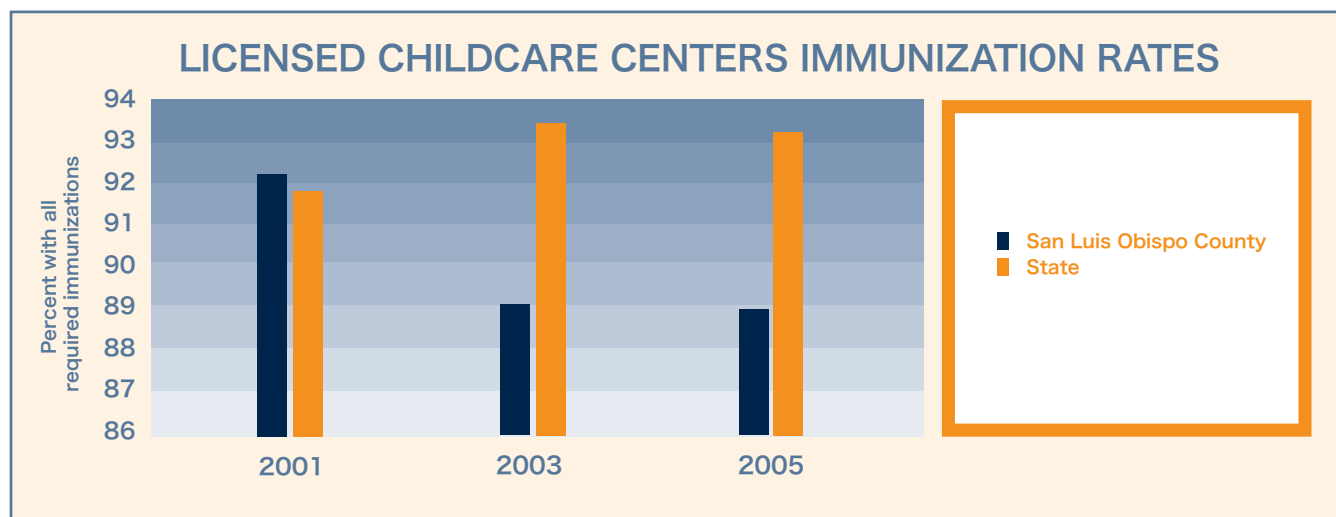
This indicator measures the percentage of children enrolled in child care centers and kindergarten who are immunized against preventable diseases.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Immunizations are a key preventative measure that safeguard the health of children, as well as the overall community. The widespread success of immunization programs in the United States has resulted in a drastic reduction of many harmful infectious diseases.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

As reflected in the charts below, the county's immunization rates appear to be declining and are now below statewide averages. The percentage of children in childcare centers in the county receiving all required immunizations (88.9%) has been declining since 2000, when 94.1% of children were immunized. However, the statewide percentage of children in childcare centers has increased slightly since 2001. The county's immunization rate for children in kindergarten has more closely mirrored the statewide rate, but has declined since 2003. Neither the county nor the state immunization rates have met the Healthy People 2010 National Objective of 95%.



\* Source: CA Department of Health Services, Immunization Branch

# BASIC NEEDS

This indicator shows the percentage of county residents who report their basic needs were not met in any given month, as tracked via a statistically valid telephone survey conducted by the ACTION for Healthy Communities Collaborative. Examples of basic needs provided in the telephone survey include food, clothing, childcare, housing and health care.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

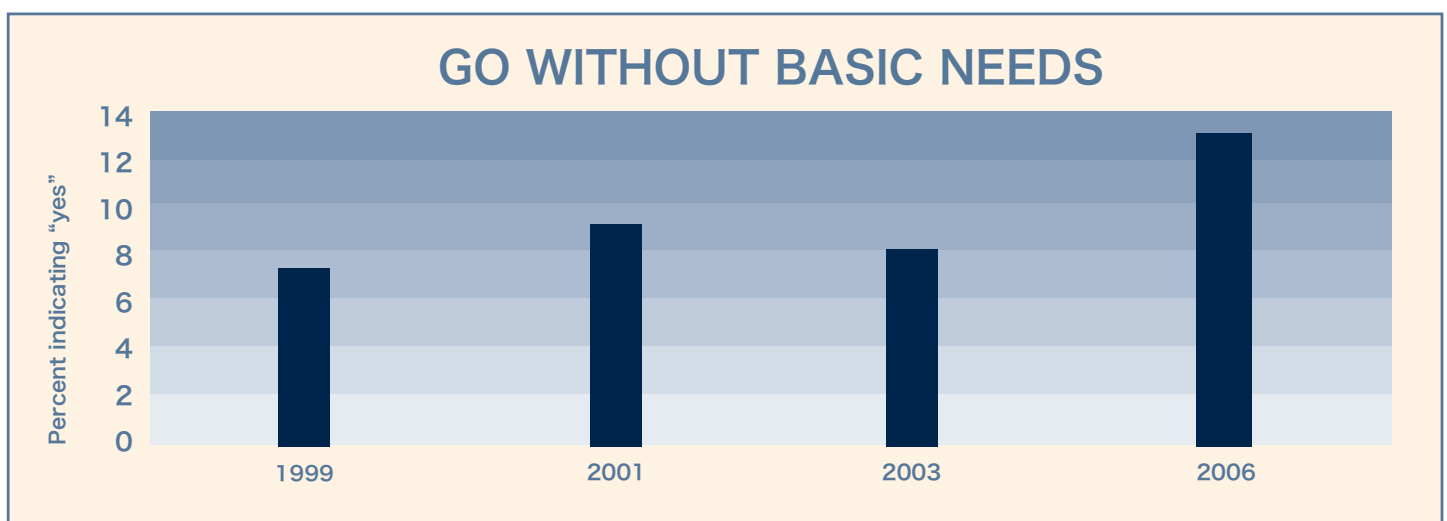
Ensuring that residents can meet their basic needs is a fundamental responsibility of a compassionate community.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

The ACTION telephone surveys conducted in 1999, 2001, 2003 and 2006 contained the following question posed to a randomly selected sample of adults in the county:

“In any given month, do you have to go without basic needs such as food, clothing, childcare, housing or health care?”

The percentage of those who have gone without one or more of these basic needs has increased from 8% in 1999 to 13% in 2006. While the percentage of respondents indicating that they have gone without basic needs remained fairly static from 1999 to 2003, that number jumped 5% in the 2006 survey, suggesting that this problem may be getting worse. As in previous years, respondents to the 2006 survey identified health care (52%), food (38%) and clothing (35%) as the most common unmet needs.



\* Source: 2006 ACTION for Healthy Communities Survey

# A LIVABLE COMMUNITY

The County will strive to keep our community a good place to live by carefully managing growth, protecting our natural resources, promoting lifelong learning, and creating an environment that encourages respect for all people.

## WATER QUALITY

This indicator measures compliance of drinking water systems with state and federal bacteriological drinking water standards. Also measured is the compliance of ocean water at local beaches with state and federal bacteriological standards for ocean water. Data is provided by the California Department of Public Health for large public drinking water systems that serve our county, and by the County Public Health/Environmental Health Division for small water systems and ocean water.

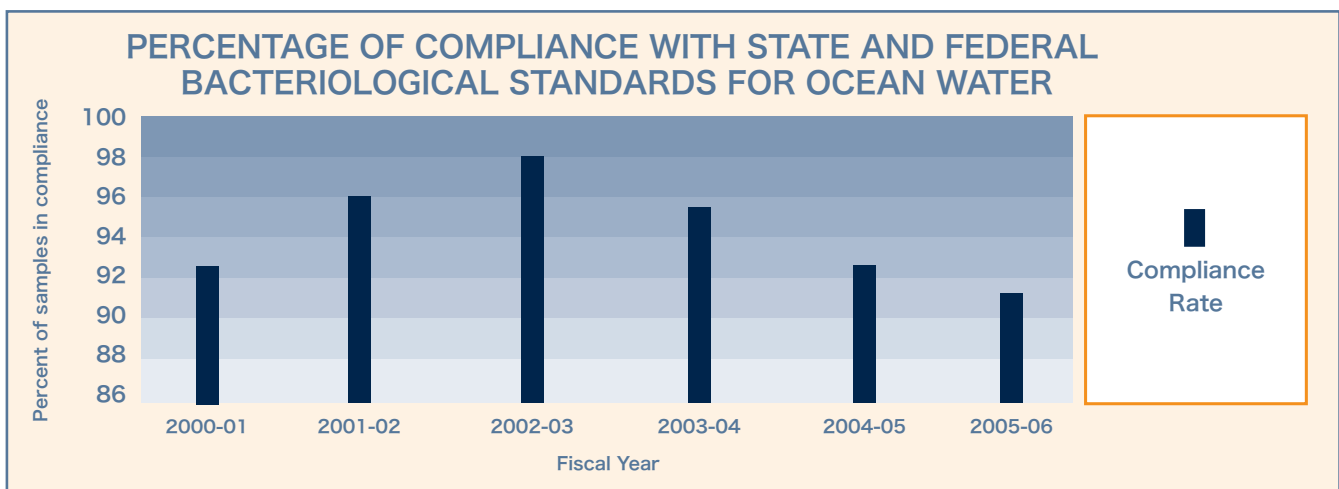
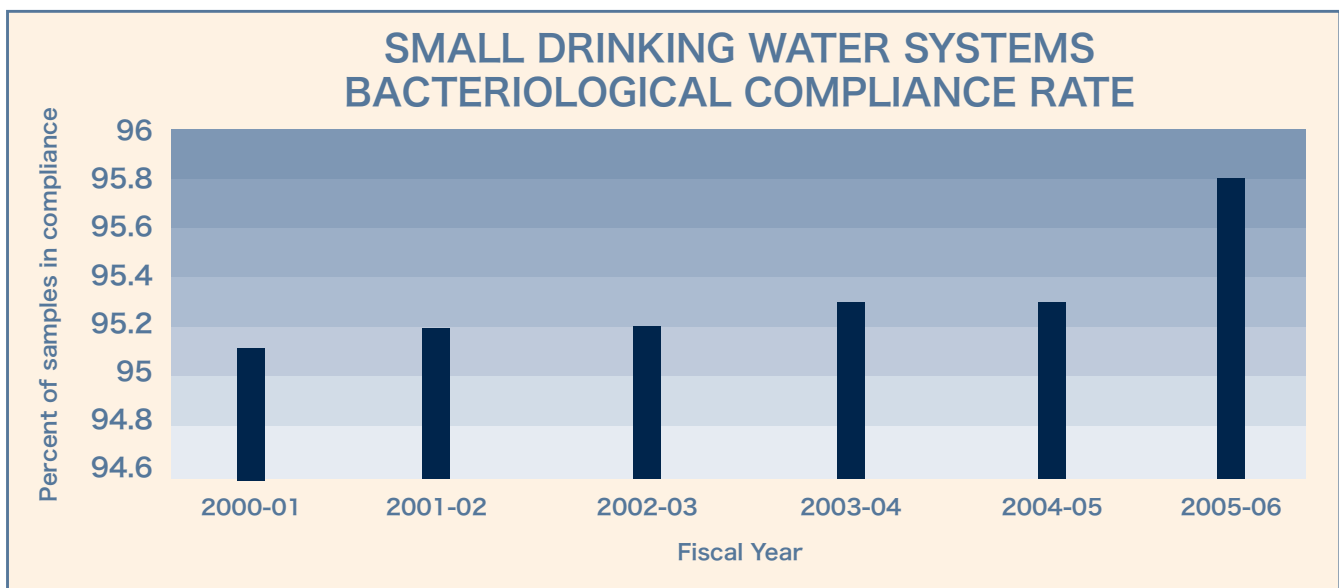
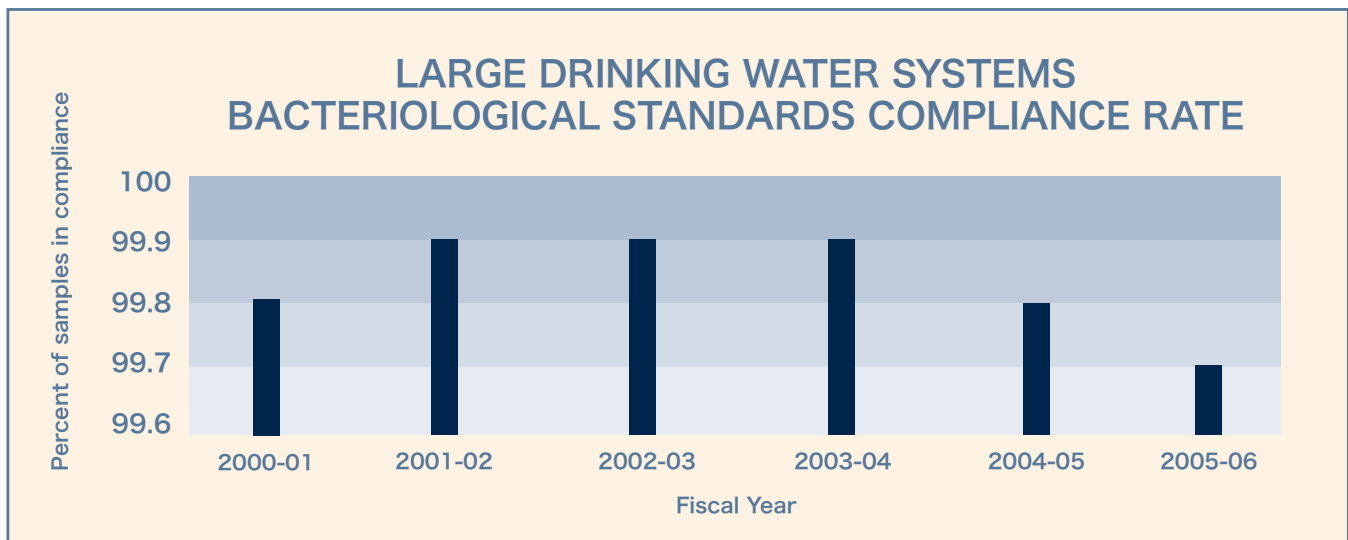
## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Clean water is essential to building and maintaining a healthy and livable community. Comprehensive measurement of water quality throughout the county has not been done given the expense involved. However, presented here is water quality data on approximately 99% of the County's drinking water supplies - tracking compliance with bacteriological drinking water standards for both large public drinking water systems as well as small water systems (i.e. five to 199 connections). Data is also reported for ocean beaches given the importance of this natural resource to recreation and tourism.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

As shown on the charts below, the large public water systems met state and federal bacteriological drinking water standards an average of 99.8% of the time in fiscal years 2000/01 through 2005/06. A total of 51 violations was documented in almost 32,400 inspections over this six-year period. During this same period, County-regulated small water systems met the same state and federal standards an average of 95.3% of the time. A total of 521 violations was documented in more than 11,000 inspections.

In addition, the waters off our most frequently used beaches complied with state and federal bacteriological standards 91.2% of the time in 2005/06, a significant drop since 2002/03 when there was 98% compliance.



\* Source: California Department of Public Health  
County Health Agency - Environmental Health Division

# AIR QUALITY

This indicator measures the quality of air in San Luis Obispo County in terms of the proportion of days that air quality is considered unhealthy.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

High levels of air pollution can have a major impact on people's health, especially people with respiratory problems. Ozone and particulates (small particles floating in the air) are the pollutants of greatest concern in San Luis Obispo County because they are the ones that exceed state standards most frequently.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

Ozone and PM10 (particulate matter) are routinely measured in a network of nine monitoring stations throughout the county. The Air Pollution Control District (APCD) compares the readings taken from the nine stations against the state's standards. The results reveal how many days the standards are exceeded, when the air is considered unhealthy, anywhere in the county. As shown on the chart on the next page, considering all sampling performed in the county, excessive PM10 caused unhealthy air on about 25% of the days in the years from 1996 through 2005.

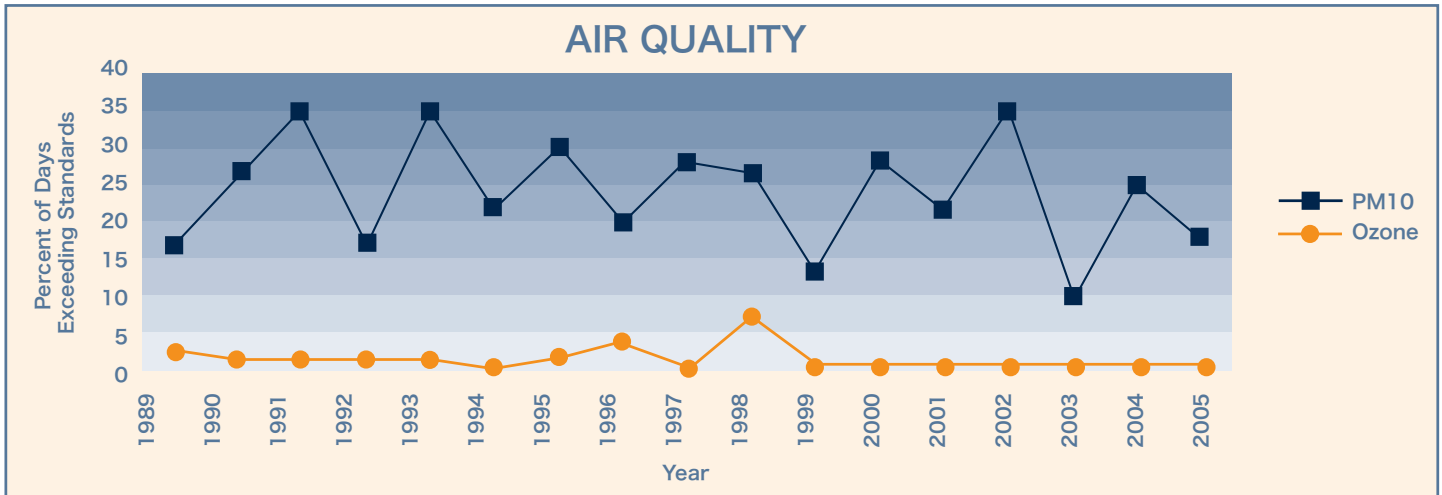
It is important to note, however, that most of PM10 standard violations occur only on the Nipomo Mesa, in areas closer to the Nipomo sand dunes. Other areas of the county usually experience PM10 violations on less than 4% of the days.

The APCD has completed a year-long special study of airborne particulate matter on the Mesa. They have concluded that a large fraction of the PM10 in those samples which exceed standards comes from the dunes and from nearby bare soil areas. Regardless of their origin, these higher PM10 levels are still considered unhealthy.

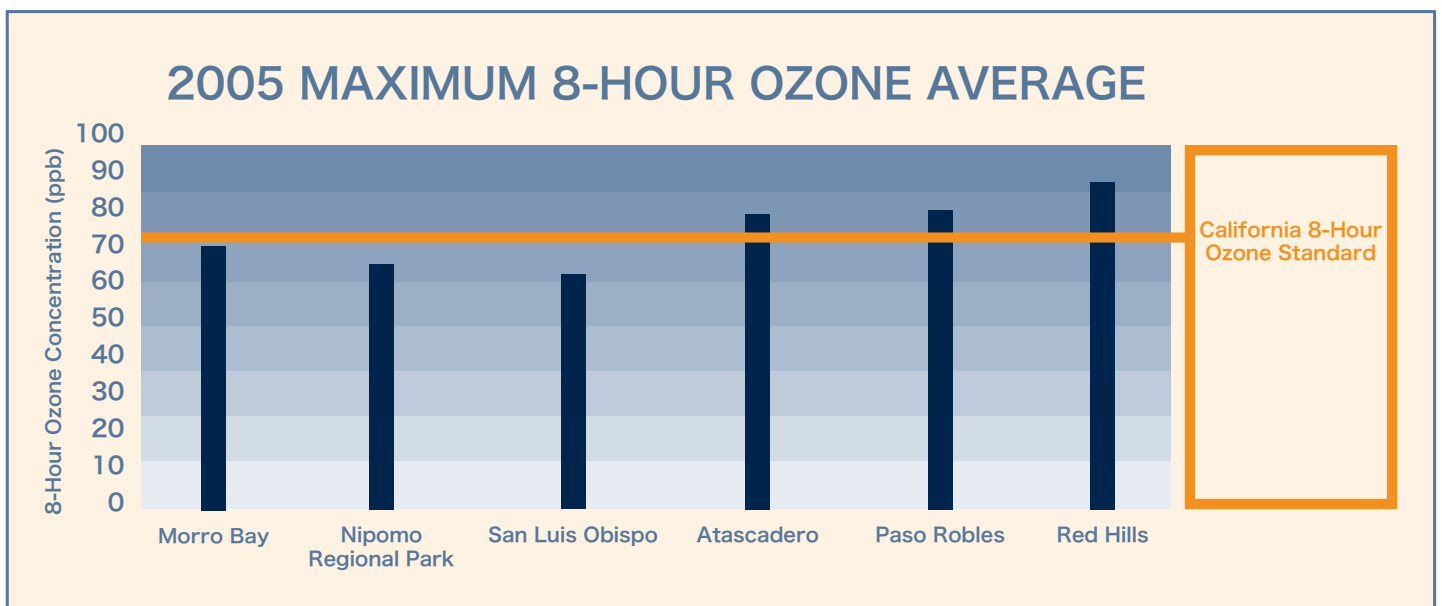
Ozone readings only exceeded state standards on 0.5% of the days in 1999, and on 0.2% of the days in 2005. No readings exceeded state one-hour or annual standards during the period 2000 through 2004. The higher ozone levels measured in 1996 and 1998 resulted from meteorological conditions during those years that were more conducive to the transport of ozone to this county from the San Joaquin Valley and the San Francisco Bay Area.

In addition to the historical ozone standard based on a one-hour average, California added a new ozone standard based on an eight-hour average in 2006. As the chart on the next page shows, South County monitoring stations did not exceed the new standard, but all North County stations did exceed the standard in 2005.





“ HIGH LEVELS OF AIR POLLUTION CAN HAVE A MAJOR IMPACT ON PEOPLE’S HEALTH, ESPECIALLY PEOPLE WITH RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS. ”



\* Source: Air Pollution Control District

# TRAFFIC CONGESTION

This indicator reports on residents' perceptions on concerns over traffic congestion and is tracked via a statistically valid telephone survey conducted by the ACTION for Healthy Communities Collaborative.

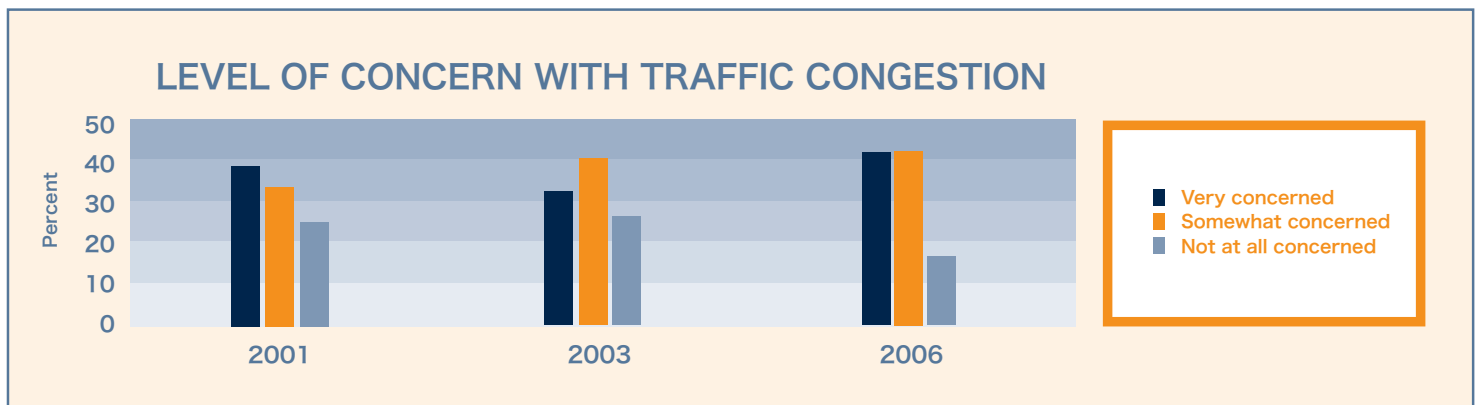
## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The ability to get where you're going safely and without serious traffic delays is important to a community's quality of life and economic health. In light of this, it is our desire to develop countywide data on traffic congestion. Until this information is available, however, we will rely on the ACTION survey data to help us monitor trends in citizen perceptions of traffic congestion.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

The 2006 ACTION survey contained the following question which was posed to 504 randomly selected adults in the county: "How concerned are you about traffic congestion in your community?"

As reflected in the graph below, traffic congestion is becoming a growing concern for residents of the county. The results of the 2006 survey showed that 41.2% of those surveyed were "very concerned" over traffic congestion, and another 41.3% were "somewhat concerned." Seventeen percent of the respondents indicated they were "not concerned at all."



\* Source: 2006 ACTION for Healthy Communities Survey

# OPEN SPACE INVENTORY

The purpose of this indicator is to provide the public with an inventory of the county’s open space resources.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Open space resources are among the county’s most significant assets, making the county a place of natural beauty and rural character, and a wonderful place for residents to live and for tourists to visit. Over time, we will be able to monitor whether we are maintaining our open space resources. County Planning has used its geographical information system to prepare the table below, which provides an overview of the open space acreage based on the County’s current General Plan.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

Using the most current information available regarding land-use categories, the table below shows the county has more than 2.1 million acres in open space, 99,092 of which are permanently preserved by an open space or conservation easement or have been designated as “scenic.”

The open space acreage has been listed by category:

- 1) “Preserved” which included Federal Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management land, state parks and beaches, County parks, etc.
- 2) “Temporarily Preserved” includes all county agricultural land currently protected by the Williamson Act,\* land owned by the US military, land owned by various other federal agencies (some of which may be leased for grazing purposes) as well as other publicly owned lands that are currently vacant.
- 3) “Not in Preserve” includes all agricultural land in the county that is not protected by the Williamson Act.\*

Source: County Planning and Building Department and Assessor parcel classification data.  
 \*The Williamson Act is a voluntary program that provides property owners with tax reductions in exchange for agreeing to use their property for agricultural uses.

PUBLIC LAND	ACRES	PRESERVED	TEMPORARILY PRESERVED
Federal Lands			
US Fish & Wildlife Service	2,649	2,649	
US Forest Service	1,995	1,995	
US Bureau of Land Management	48,211	48,211	
US Military	24,608		24,608
Other Federal Lands/Federal Lands Zoned "OS"	366,132	190,110	176,022
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>443,595</b>	<b>242,965</b>	<b>200,630</b>
State Lands			
Parks & Beaches	5,261	5,261	
Other State Lands/State Lands Zoned "OS"	67,513	2,434	65,079
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72,774</b>	<b>7,695</b>	<b>65,079</b>
County Lands			
County Lands/County Lands Zoned "OS"	10,380	1,316	9,064
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,380</b>	<b>1,316</b>	<b>9,064</b>
<b>ZONING</b>			
Open Space/Balance not accounted for in Public Lands	211,788	17,928	
Agriculture	1,389,857		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,601,645</b>	<b>17,928</b>	
<b>LANDS PROTECTED BY CONTRACT/EASEMENT</b>			
AG Contract - Williamson Act*	781,061		781,061
Open Space Easement	96,789	96,789	
Conservation Easement	2,267	2,267	
Scenic	36	36	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>880,153</b>	<b>99,092</b>	
<b>TOTAL BY CATEGORY</b>	<b>2,126,238</b>	<b>368,996</b>	<b>1,055,834</b>

# PARKS AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

This indicator measures resident perceptions on parks and recreation opportunities in the county and is tracked via a statistically valid telephone survey conducted by the ACTION for Healthy Communities Collaborative.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

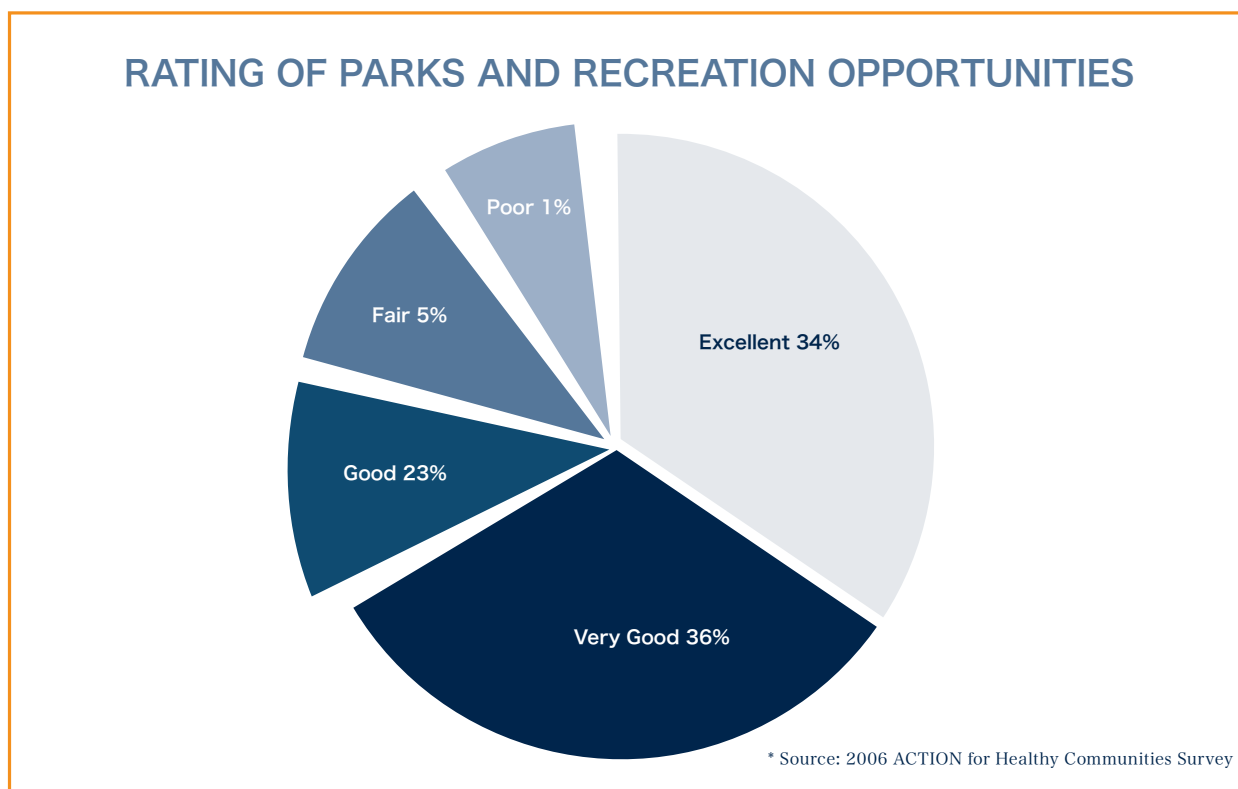
Quality parks and recreation opportunities are a key component of a livable community. Regularly checking in with our residents to find out how they rate those opportunities provides us with valuable customer information on which to base future resource decisions.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

The 2006 ACTION telephone survey included the following question which was posed to 504 randomly selected adults in the county:

“In your opinion, how would you rate San Luis Obispo County in the following area: Parks and Recreation Opportunities?”

The survey results showed that 93% of those surveyed rated parks and recreation opportunities as “good” (23%), “very good” (36%) or “excellent” (34%). Only 6% rated parks and recreation opportunities as “fair” (5%) or “poor” (1%). These results are comparable to the results from the 2001 ACTION survey of 522 respondents, when 92% of respondents answered “good,” “very good” or “excellent.”



# LIBRARY SERVICES

This indicator measures residents' perception of the quality of County Library services and is tracked via two statistically valid surveys of community residents conducted every three years: a telephone survey conducted by the ACTION for Healthy Communities Collaborative and a mail-in survey conducted by the National Research Center as part of the Citizen's Survey Project.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

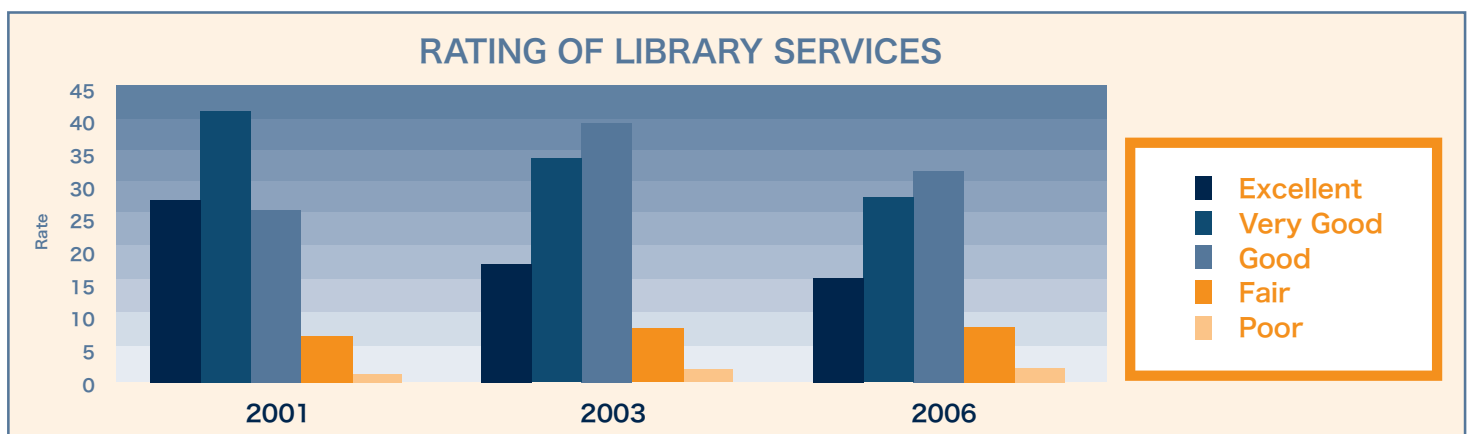
Libraries play a variety of important roles in a community. They offer recreational opportunities, promote literacy and help bridge the digital divide by providing residents with access to books, materials, computers and the Internet. Tracking residents' perceptions on the quality of library services provides library personnel with important customer information used to continuously improve their services.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

The 2006 ACTION telephone survey contained the following question, which was posed to 504 randomly selected adults in the county:

"How would you rate the San Luis Obispo County Library Services?"

The survey results showed that 76% of those surveyed rated library services as "good." However the proportion of respondents giving the Library the highest ratings of "excellent" (16%) and "very good" (28%) has declined since 2001, revealing a shift in the level of satisfaction community members have with Library Services. In 2001, 66% of respondents rated Library Services as "excellent" (25%) or "very good" (41%). In the November 2004 election, Measure L, a proposal to add a 25-cent sales tax to help fund Library Services, failed to pass the required two-thirds majority vote. As a result, the Library was forced to reduce open hours and eliminate approximately 16 full-time staff resources. Since then, however, the Library has added new services to expand remote access to the Library collection via the Internet, which many community members may not be aware of. In the Citizen's Opinion Survey, respondents were asked to rate various services delivered by the County, including Public Library Services. Of the respondents that provided an opinion, 75% indicated that these services are "good" (57%) or "excellent" (18%). Thirteen percent (13%) rated these services as "fair," and only 5% indicated that the services are "poor."



\* Source: 2006 ACTION for Healthy Communities Survey

# DISCRIMINATION

This indicator reports on the percentage of residents that feel they have experienced some type of discrimination in the past 12 months and is tracked via a statistically valid telephone survey conducted by the ACTION for Healthy Communities Collaborative.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Everyone is entitled to live in a community free of discrimination. Regularly surveying the community on this topic provides us with basic information on the scale of the problem, as well as the type of discrimination taking place.

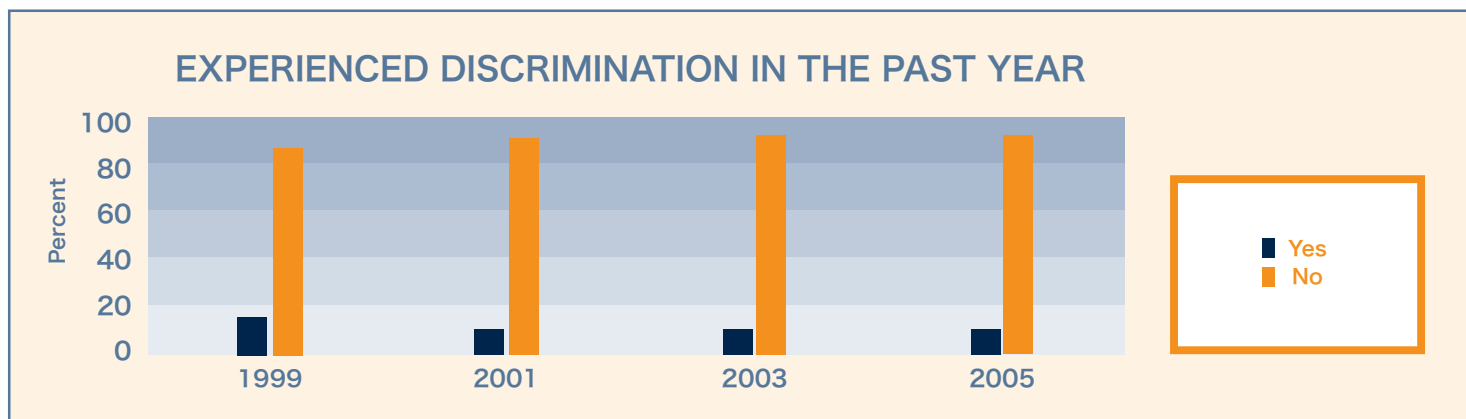
## HOW ARE WE DOING?

The 2006 ACTION telephone survey contained the following question, which was posed to 504 randomly selected adults in the county:

“Have you felt discriminated against in San Luis Obispo County in the last 12 months?”

The results showed that 8% of those surveyed indicated they had experienced some type of discrimination in the past year. This figure is down slightly from the 2003 survey results of 10%, continuing the downward trend since this survey was first conducted in 1999. Ethnicity (23%), disability (23%), age (18%) and gender (13%) were the four areas of discrimination most often identified in the 2006 survey. The issue of discrimination for disability reasons was added to the ACTION survey in 2006, and the data reveals that this is one of the primary factors for which people feel discriminated against.

In addition, the Citizen’s Satisfaction Survey asked respondents to rate 10 characteristics as they relate to San Luis Obispo County – one being “Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds.” It received an average rating of 49 on a 100-point scale. This rating implies that the perception of discrimination is stronger from the actual occurrence than the ACTION data suggests. The ACTION survey data reflects personal experience with discrimination, whereas the Citizen’s Opinion Survey captures the overall perception of openness toward people of diverse backgrounds.



\* Source: 2006 ACTION for Healthy Communities Survey

# A PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY

The County will strive to keep our economy strong and viable and assure that all share in this economic prosperity.

## AGRICULTURAL CROP SALES

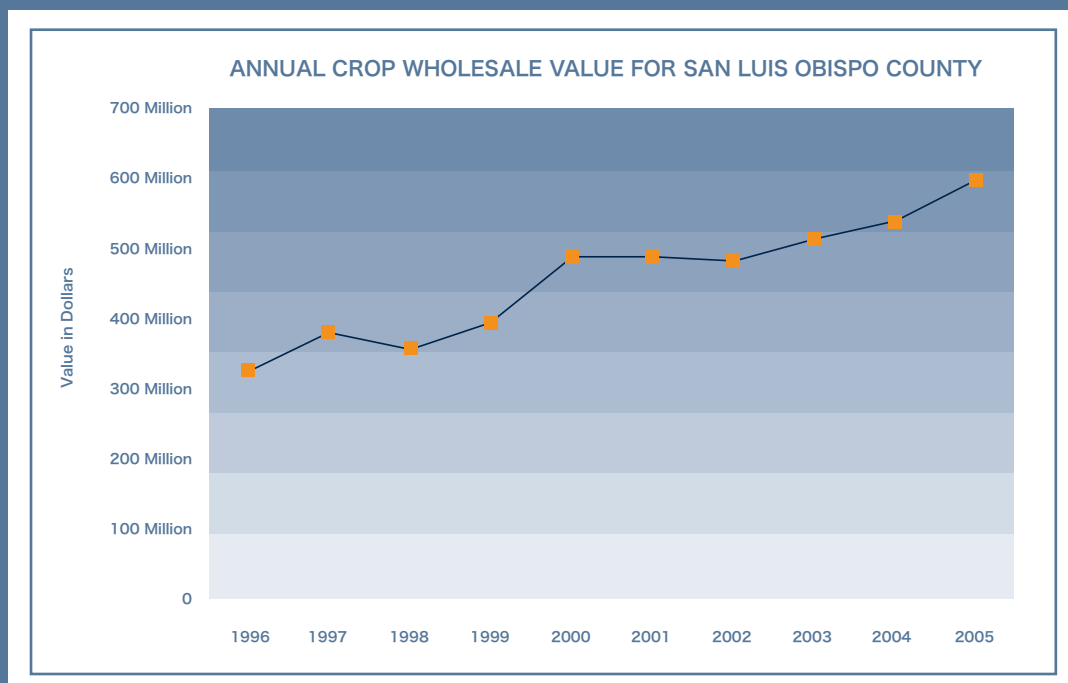
This indicator tracks the total annual crop wholesale values for San Luis Obispo County's five major production areas – animals, field crops, nurseries and seeds, fruits and nuts, and vegetables.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Agriculture continues to be a very important component of the county's economy. It helps to diversify the local economy and buffers the county from the ups and downs of the general economic cycle. Additionally, agriculture is an export industry, meaning it brings money in from outside of the county. Finally, for every dollar spent on agriculture, an additional 2.5 to 3 times is generated in local agribusiness sales (e.g., farm equipment sales, etc.).

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

County farmers and ranchers set new economic records for 2005, with wholesale crop sales exceeding \$596.7 million, up 11% from the prior year. Fruit and nut crops led the way with \$243.6 million in sales, largely due to the increase in the value of wine grapes, which makes up 80% of the total sales in this category and continues to represent the single largest cash crop for the county. The wholesale value of wine grapes alone jumped 47% as compared to 2004. Vegetable crops, the second largest category, reached \$175.2 million, just short of the peak level reached over the past 10 years.



\* Source: County Agriculture Commissioner

## TOURISM SPENDING

This indicator tracks the total annual travel spending in the county.

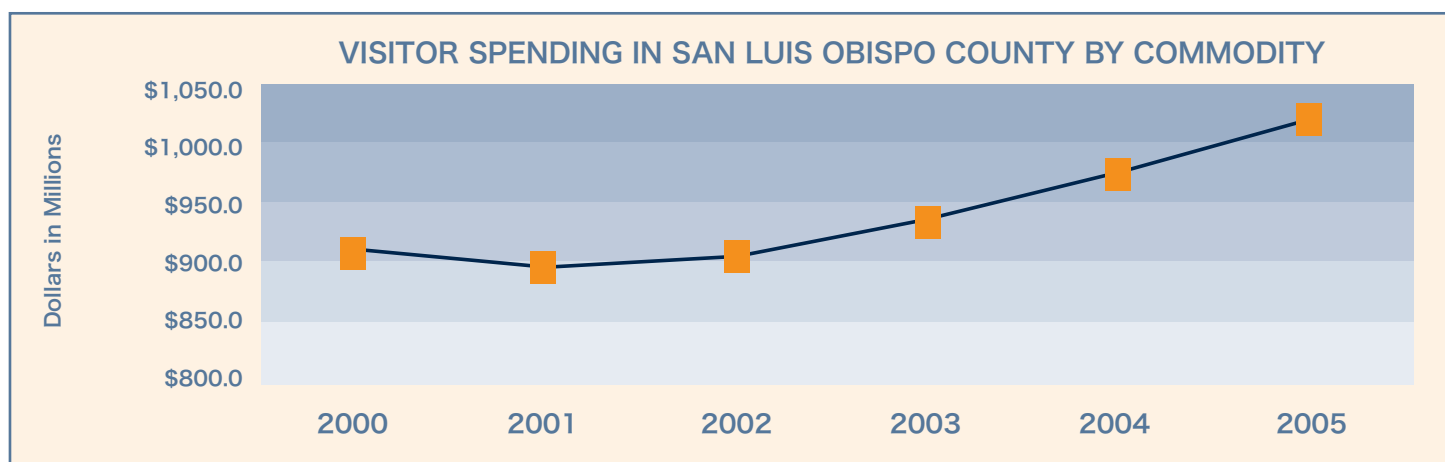
### WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Our beautiful coastline, accessible beaches, fine restaurants and burgeoning wine industry have made San Luis Obispo County a very popular tourist destination. This popularity, in turn, has made tourism a very important component of our local economy. Tracking the levels of travel spending from year to year provides us with a good indication of the health of the tourism industry and overall economy.

### HOW ARE WE DOING?

As shown on the table below:

Visitors to San Luis Obispo County spent more than \$1 billion in 2005 (the last year for which we have data); up almost 5% from 2004 levels. The largest portion of this spending, \$275.8 million or more than 27%, represented food and beverage sales. Retail sales (22.4%), accommodations (22.1%), and arts, entertainment and recreation (14.6%), were the other major components of visitor spending.



\* Source: Dean Runyan Associates (Retrieved 05/23/2007)

“OUR BEAUTIFUL COASTLINE, ACCESSIBLE BEACHES, FINE RESTAURANTS AND BURGEONING WINE INDUSTRY HAVE MADE SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY A VERY POPULAR TOURIST DESTINATION.”



# PER CAPITA RETAIL SALES

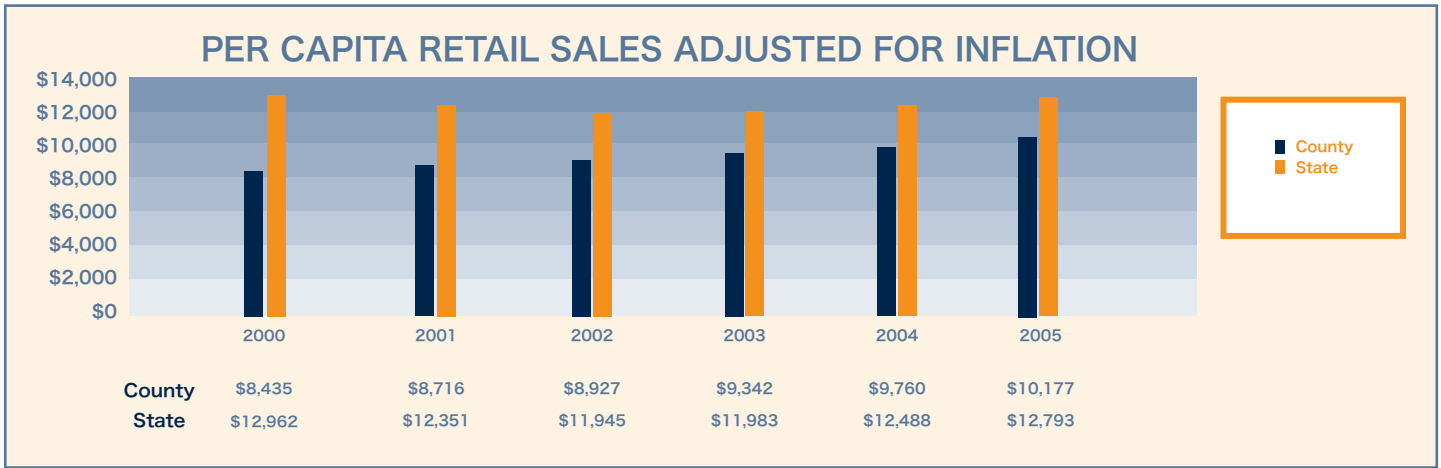
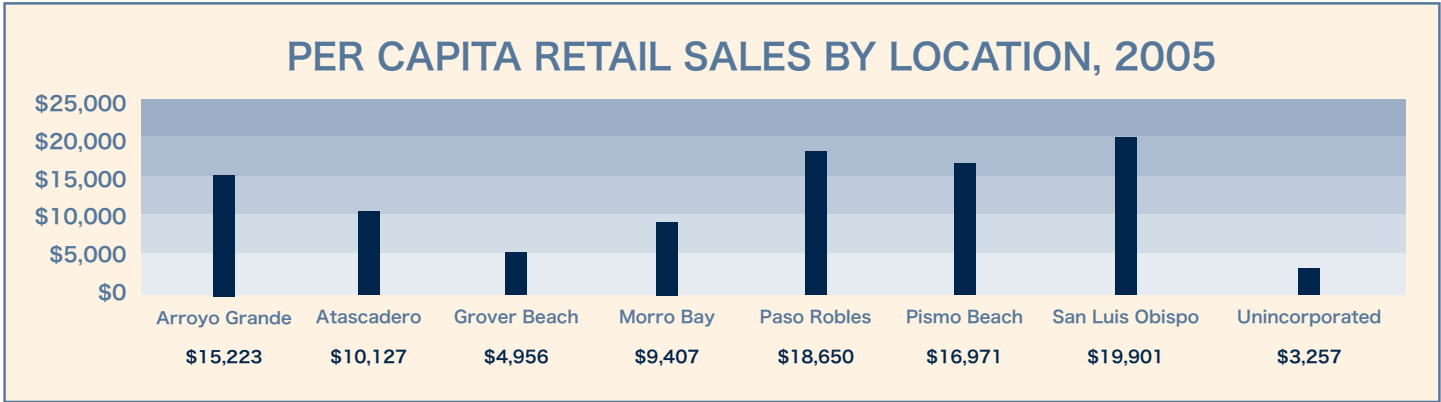
This indicator tracks the average number of dollars spent each year in retail stores, on a per resident basis, adjusted for inflation.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Retail sales represent a sizeable component of the county’s economy. These sales serve as a barometer for how well residents are doing economically and how much disposable income they have to spend.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

As shown on the accompanying graphs, the county’s per capita retail sales for the year 2005 averaged \$10,177 up 14% from 2002 (the year last reported in the 2003 edition). This is approximately 20% lower than the statewide average of \$12,793. Within the county, the city of San Luis Obispo had the highest per capita retail sales of \$19,901, followed closely by the city of Paso Robles, with \$18,650. Per capita retail sales were lowest in the unincorporated area of the County (\$3,257).



\* Source: State Board of Equalization  
Population Estimates from the CA Department of Finance

## PERSONAL INCOME

This indicator tracks the average per capita income of people in the county, adjusted for inflation.

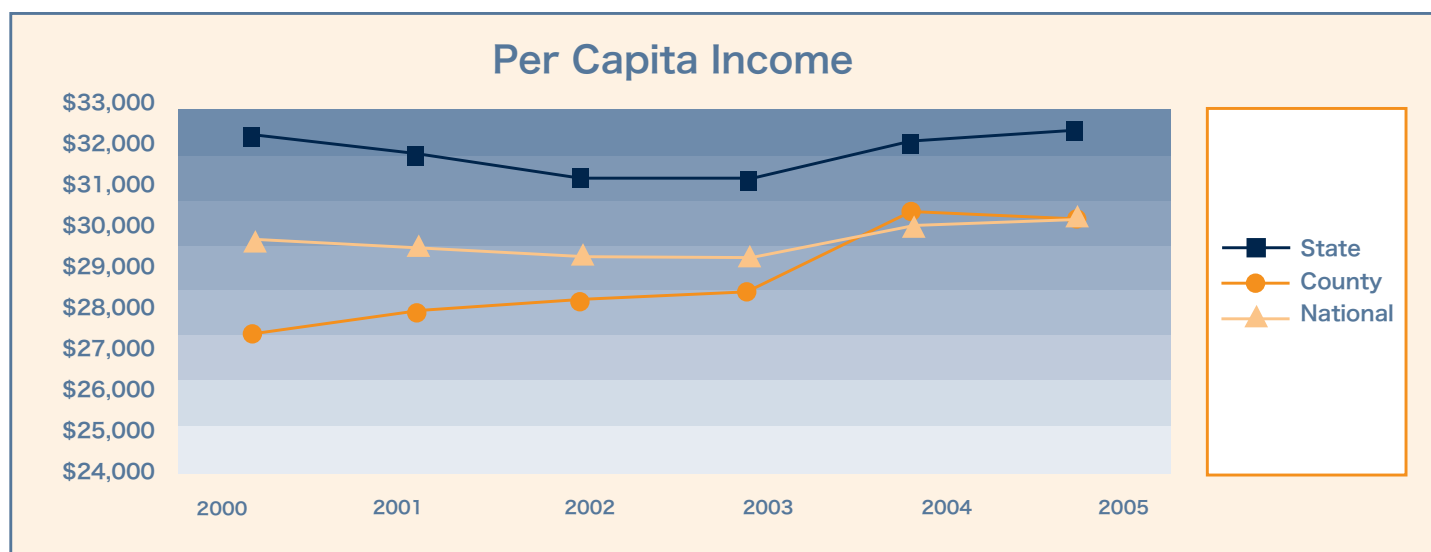
### WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Personal income is an indirect indicator of quality of life. Income enables individuals and families to make both necessary and discretionary purchases of goods and services.

### HOW ARE WE DOING?

Personal income includes wages and salaries, transfer payments (i.e., social security, property and investment income), and income from self-employment. The graph presented below shows that the county's per capita personal income has consistently been below that of the state, and only recently has come close to the national per capita income level. In 2005, the nominal per capita personal income for San Luis Obispo County was \$34,305, which was 93% of the state average of \$36,936 and almost 100% of the national average of \$34,471. The average annual growth rate from 1995 - 2005 was 5.3%, which was slightly higher than that of the state (4.3%) or the nation (4.1%).

“ PERSONAL INCOME IS AN INDIRECT INDICATOR OF QUALITY OF LIFE. INCOME ENABLES INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES TO MAKE BOTH NECESSARY AND DISCRETIONARY PURCHASES OF GOODS AND SERVICES. ”



\* Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, CA-3

# AFFORDABLE HOUSING

This indicator tracks the percentage of homes sold in the San Luis Obispo area that a family with a median income could afford to buy.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

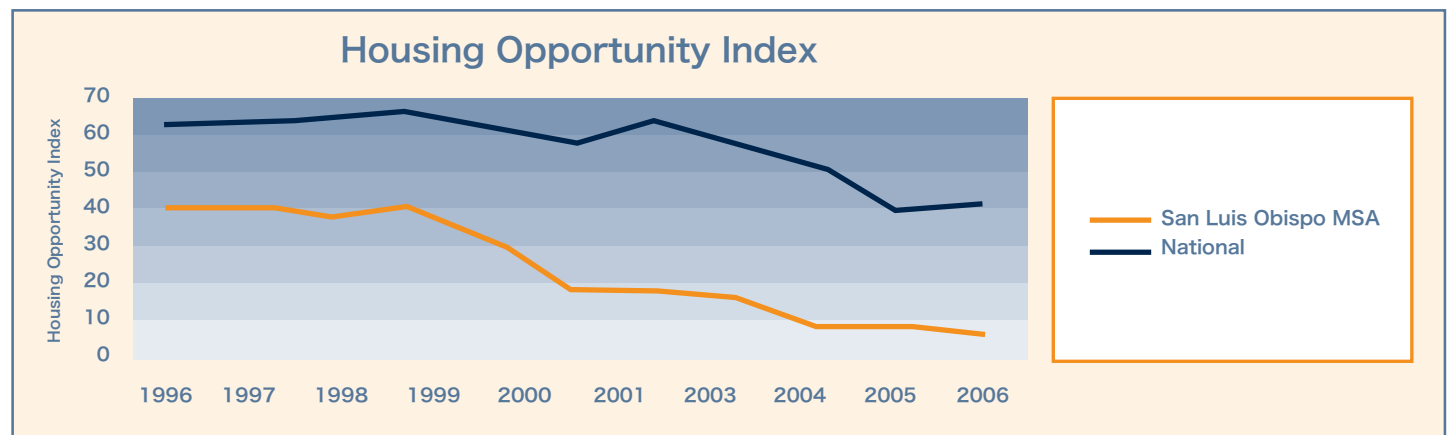
Affordable housing is a basic component of any livable community. High housing prices, coupled with relatively low incomes, make housing affordability one of the most challenging issues facing our county.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

The chart below shows housing affordability as measured by the Housing Opportunity Index. The Index is defined as the share of homes sold in a given area that would have been affordable to a family earning the local median income based on standard mortgage underwriting criteria. Each quarter, the National Association of Home Builders calculates the Index for all “Metropolitan Statistical Areas” (MSA) in the nation. An MSA is defined by the US Bureau of Census as “a large population nucleus, together with communities having a high degree of social and economic integration with that core.”

Our local MSA extends from the city of San Luis Obispo through Paso Robles (note: the MSA does not include the southern part of the county, and there is not similar data available for this part of the county at this time). In the fourth quarter of 2006, only 7.1% of the homes sold in our local MSA could be purchased by a family with a median income for this same area (\$63,800). This makes the San Luis Obispo MSA the 14th least affordable area in the nation.

“HIGH HOUSING PRICES, COUPLED WITH RELATIVELY LOW INCOMES, MAKE HOUSING AFFORDABILITY ONE OF THE MOST CHALLENGING ISSUES FACING OUR COUNTY.”



\* Source: National Association of Home Builders  
Note: Data was not available for the 4th Quarter in 2002

# UNEMPLOYMENT

This indicator tracks the annual average unemployment rate for the county.

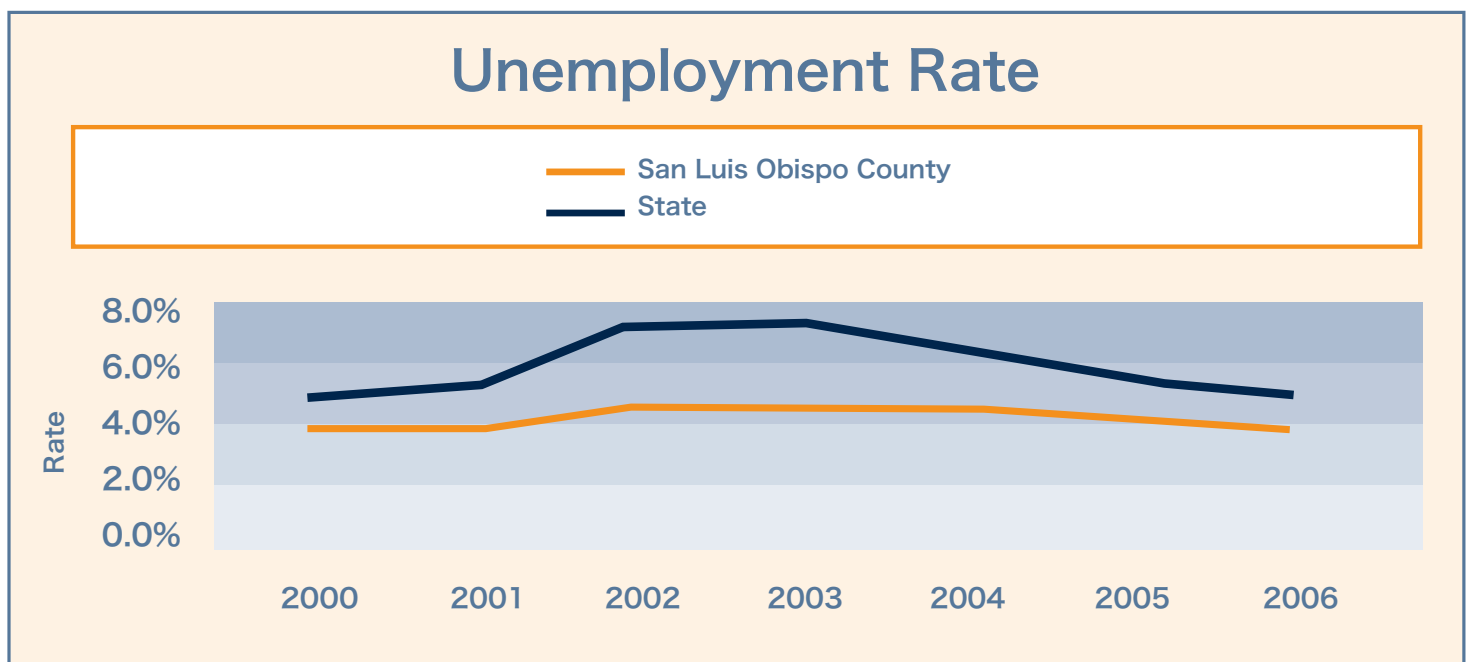
## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

A prosperous community has an adequate supply of jobs that generate income sufficient to pay for basic needs. The unemployment rate represents one piece of a complex puzzle that helps us determine whether we're achieving this goal.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

As shown on the graph below, the county's annual average unemployment rate for 2006 was 4%. Roughly 5,300 people out of a total county labor force of 133,900 were unemployed and actively seeking work in 2006, based on data provided by the California Employment Development Department. The county's unemployment rate compares favorably to the state and national rates of 4.9% and 4.6% respectively.

“ A PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY HAS AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF JOBS THAT GENERATE INCOME SUFFICIENT TO PAY FOR BASIC NEEDS. ”



\* Source: CA Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division

# A WELL-GOVERNED COMMUNITY

The County will provide quality “results-oriented” services that are responsive to community desires.

## VOTER PARTICIPATION

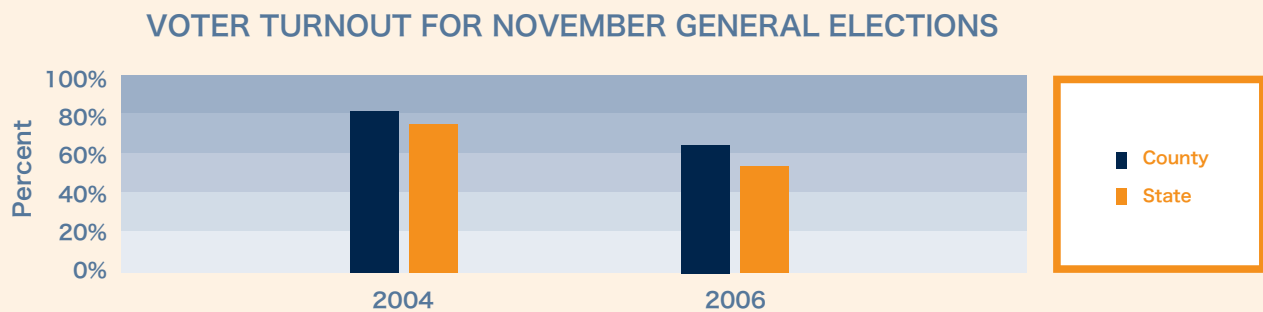
This indicator shows the percentage of eligible voters (i.e., the total voter pool) that voted in the last presidential election.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Voter participation is critical to a well-governed community. It helps to build and maintain a responsive government and is a direct reflection of whether people feel they have a stake in the future.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

In the November 2006 General Election, 82% of county residents eligible to vote were registered. Of those registered voters, 63.8% participated by voting, compared to the statewide voter participation rate of 56.2%. In the November 2004 Presidential Election, 87.5% of county residents eligible to vote were registered. Of those registered voters, 80.2% participated by voting, compared to the statewide voter participation rate of 76.1% and the national rate of 63.8%. (National data for the 2006 General Election was not available). Voter participation rates are typically higher in a presidential election year.



\* Source: CA Secretary of State

# PERCEPTION OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT

This indicator reports on citizen perceptions of County services, and is tracked via two statistically valid surveys: a telephone survey conducted by the ACTION for Healthy Communities Collaborative and a mail survey conducted by the National Research Center for the County under the National Citizen's Survey project.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

It is the County's desire to provide efficient, high-quality, results-oriented services to all of our residents. In support of this, we have implemented a variety of organizational effectiveness programs over the last several years. Tracking people's perceptions of County government is one way to determine whether these organizational effectiveness programs are working.

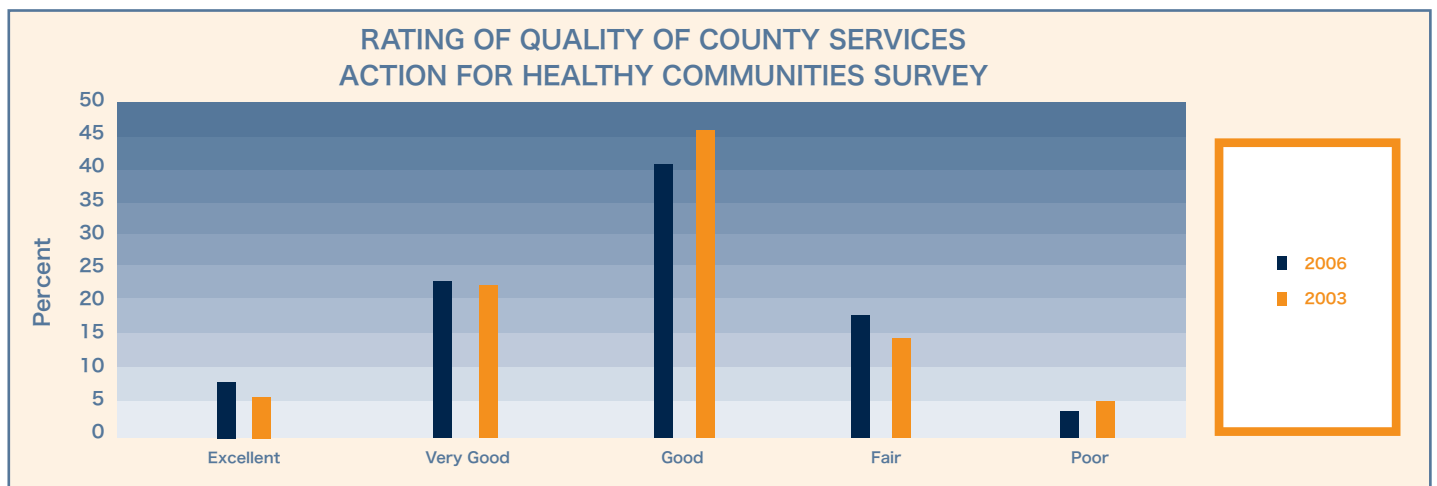
## HOW ARE WE DOING?

The 2006 ACTION telephone survey contained the following question, which was posed to 504 randomly selected adults in the county: "Overall, how would you rate the quality of services provided by San Luis Obispo County government?"

The survey showed that 71% of the respondents rated the County as "good" (41.4%), "very good" (22.9%) or "excellent" (6.8%). Seventeen-percent (17%) rated the quality of the County's services as "fair," and 4.6% gave us a grade of "poor." These results are similar to those ratings given in the 2003 survey.

In addition, the 2006 Citizen's Opinion Survey collected data regarding residents' perception of County government. Those surveyed were asked to rate the quality of services provided by San Luis Obispo County. The results showed that 57% of the respondents rated the services provided by the County as "good" (52%) or "excellent" (5%).

Respondents of the 2007 Citizen's Opinion Survey were also asked if they have had contact with County employees in the past 12 months, and if so, to rate their overall impression of that contact in terms of the knowledge, responsiveness and courtesy of County staff. Fifty-seven percent of the survey respondents had contact with County employees in the past year, and of those, 72% rated their overall impression of these contacts as "good" (48%) or "excellent" (24%). These results for the 2007 survey indicate that the interactions remained positive, when compared to the 2003 survey. However, there was a statistically significant reduction in the proportion of respondents rating their overall impression of these contacts as "excellent," declining from 33% in 2003 to 24% in 2006.



\* Sources: 2006 ACTION for Healthy Communities Survey, 2007 Citizen Opinion Survey

# PER CAPITA GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

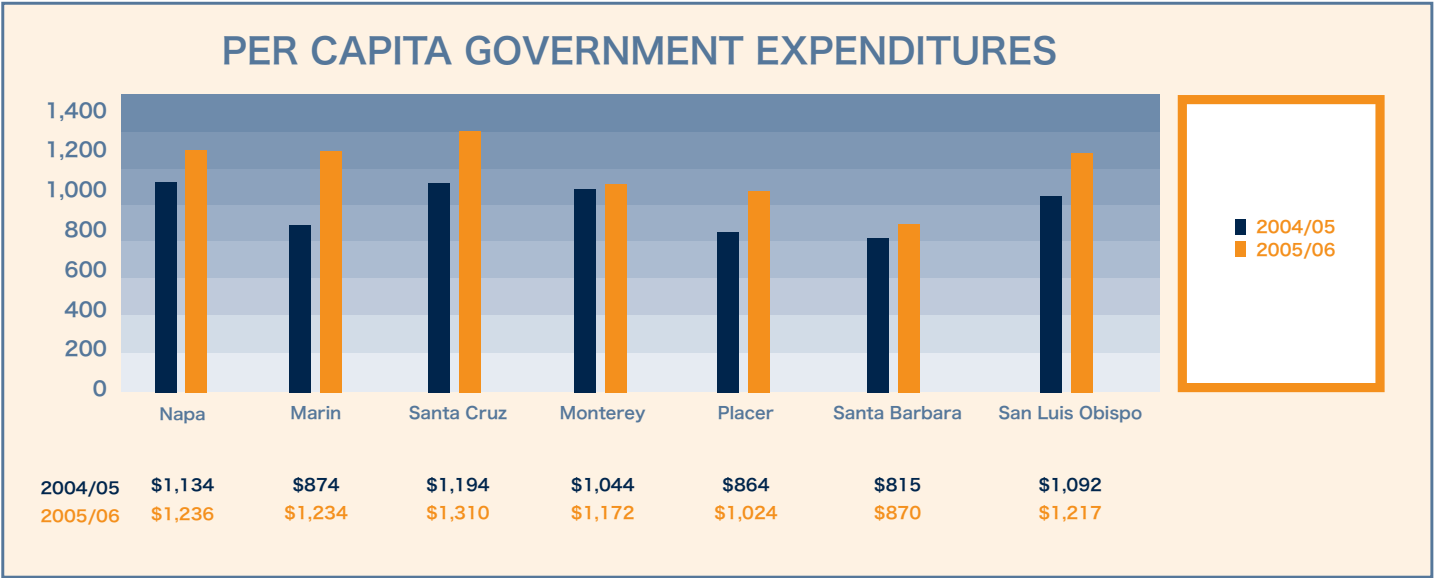
This indicator tracks the County’s total annual General Fund expenditures on a per resident basis.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

This indicator provides “big picture” trend information on annual expenditures in counties that are comparable to ours. It is important to note that this indicator does not present an “apples-to-apples” comparison in all cases because county governments classify funds differently. For example, Santa Barbara County does not include any of its health and human services program expenses in its General Fund.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

Using 2005/06 actual General Fund expenditures, we found that the County spent approximately \$1,217 per resident in the 2005/06 fiscal year. When these figures are compared to similar counties, this amount is somewhat higher than the average of \$1,152 per resident in the same period. The high among this group of counties is Napa County with \$1,236 per resident; the low is Santa Barbara County at \$870 per resident.



\* Source: County Administrative Office

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to recognize and thank the following organizations for their invaluable assistance with preparing this document: the ACTION for Healthy Communities Collaborative, County departments and various agencies that provide services in San Luis Obispo County.

In closing, we hope that you find the Communitywide Results report insightful and useful. Please direct your suggestions or any other comments to the County Administrative Office at (805) 781-5011.